

From *Garnered Sheaves*, Essays, Addresses, and Reviews
by James George Frazer (London, 1931).

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IV

THE LANGUAGE OF ANIMALS¹

*“ Sie sprechen eine Sprache,
Die ist so reich, so schön,
Doch keiner der Philologen
Kann diese Sprache verstehn.”*

HEINE.

IT is an old belief that animals, and even plants, talk to each other, and that men can freely understand and answer them. But this belief, born of that primitive communism which makes the whole world kin, is gradually dispelled by a more exact observation of Nature; and men, beginning to draw the line more sharply between themselves and the lower creatures, are fain to confess that they understand the beast language no longer, though they cling to the idea that the faculty is still enjoyed by a few, either as a natural gift or an acquired accomplishment. Sometimes with a peculiar fitness this antique lore is the special attribute of simple folk, as fools or children, who reflect the mental state of a bygone age. A modern poet can still ask the children to

*“ Whisper in my ear
What the birds and the winds are singing
In your sunny atmosphere,”*

as if the kingdom of Nature, like the kingdom of heaven, were hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes.²

Combating the practice of killing animals for food,

¹ Reprinted, with a few corrections, from *The Archaeological Review*, vol. i Nos. 2 and 3 (April and May 1888).

² “ *Ut non alius fere sit aditus ad*

regnum hominis, quod fundatur in scientiis quam ad regnum coelorum, in quod, nisi sub persona infantis, intrare non datur” (Bacon, *Novum Organum*, i. 68).

Porphry argues that they are reasonable creatures and speak a language which differs from that of man only in this, that whereas human language is regulated by human laws, the language of the beasts is bound by no rules save those imposed by Nature and the gods "What though we do not understand the beast language?" he asks; "a Greek does not understand a Hindoo; and to a man bred in Attica, the Syriac, Thracian, or Scythian tongue is unintelligible, and sounds like the croaking and creaking of cranes".¹ A belief like Porphyry's is still held, on grounds not unlike his, by the Indians of Guiana. "In Guiana countless Indian stories, fully believed, introduce the sayings of animals; and though the individual Indian knows that he no longer understands the language of the beasts and birds around him, yet he attaches but little weight to this, in that he is constantly meeting with other Indians of one or other of the many alien tribes which surround him, who speak languages at least as unintelligible to him as are those of birds or beasts; and in that, as he is fully persuaded, he constantly hears the peaiman [medicine-man] still converse with birds and beasts."²

When the language of the beasts is thus a foreign tongue to man, the ideas he has of it are naturally vague. Sometimes he seems to think that all animals speak the same speech, sometimes that the speech of birds differs from that of beasts, sometimes that each species of animal has its own distinct language. The last was perhaps Porphyry's notion, for according to him some races of men have a natural aptitude for the language of certain animals; the Arabs, he said, understand crows, the Etruscans eagles.³ A Syrian story⁴ specially mentions the bear language and the lion language; a young man understands and converses in both, and acts as interpreter between the lions and the daughter of the elfin-king, who, brought to be the bride of the lion-prince, does not understand the lion language. When a bear asks the youth how he learned the bear language, he answers "By the grace of God". In another Syrian tale⁵ a chief's daughter has been swallowed by a shark; and a fish, who had been swallowed

¹ Porphyry, *De abstinentia*, iii. 3.

² E. F. Im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana*, p. 352.

³ *De abstinentia*, iii. 4.

⁴ E. Prym and A. Socin, *Syrische Sagen und Maerchen* (Gottingen, 1881), No. xxx.

⁵ *Id.* No. xxiv.

by the shark at the same time, is questioned as to the girl's fate by a Mohammedan doctor of law who understands the language of fish. A Swabian story¹ tells how a man understood the language of geese, and from overhearing a conversation of these birds was able to anticipate their attack on a farmer's crop. In a modern Greek tale from Epirus² a poor man goes out to earn his bread. He comes to a river on whose banks the birds twitter and sing. Here he stays three years to learn their language. When he has mastered it he returns home, and hearing that a certain queen has a toad in her body and can get no help from any physician, he goes to see what he can do for her. First he speaks in the snake language, but the toad makes no answer. Next he tries the frog language; still no response. Lastly he tries the toad language. Immediately the toad answers from the queen's body, and in the course of conversation admits that he dislikes sour things. A dose of vinegar is promptly administered to the queen, who is soon rid of the toad. The poor man receives a ducat from the grateful monarch. In this story it is implied that a knowledge of the bird language carries with it a knowledge of the languages of other animals. We shall meet the same implication again.

A knowledge of the language of animals is sometimes ascribed to particular persons, legendary or historical. Peter Petrovitch of Cracow, a hero of Russian song, talked with the fowls of the air.³ The Indians say that Menabozho understood the languages of all animals.⁴ In a fabulous life of Alexander the Great, written in French prose in the fifteenth century, Alexander is represented as borne through the air in a glass cage, yoked with eight griffins, and he is accompanied by magicians who understand the language of birds.⁵

¹ A. Birlinger, *Volksthümliches aus Schwaben*, i p. 335.

² J. G. von Hahn, *Griechische und albanesische Märchen*, No. 33.

³ A. Rambaud, *La Russie épique* (Paris, 1876), p. 80.

⁴ A. Bastian in *Zeitschrift f. Ethnologie*, i. p. 158.

⁵ John Dunlop, *History of Fiction* (2nd ed., 1816), ii. p. 127; *ib.* p. 184 of F. Liebrecht's German translation (Berlin, 1851). The prose romance is

based on two metrical romances, one by Lambert li Tors, the other by Thomas of Kent (Dunlop, ii. p. 124). A collection of mediaeval French metrical romances on the history of Alexander (including extracts from Thomas of Kent) was published from the MSS. by Mr Paul Meyer, under the title *Alexandre le Grand dans la littérature Française du moyen âge* (Paris, 1886). In one of them (*MS. de la Bibl. Imp.* No. 789)

In the Koran¹ Solomon is made to say, "O ye folk! we have been taught the speech of birds"; and he is supposed to have understood more than the bird language, for, coming with his hosts to the valley of the ants, he hears an ant saying, "O ye ants! go into your dwellings, that Solomon and his hosts crush you not while they do not perceive," at which speech the king laughs.

According to an Arabic legend,² Solomon, reposing in the valley between Hebron and Jerusalem, is visited by the angels of the winds and the angels that bear rule over all living things; by their help he summons to his presence animals of every kind, and converses with them. Moslems still believe that "all kinds of birds, and many (if not all) beasts, have a language by which they communicate their thoughts to each other".³ It was from the Moors of Spain that Gerbert, afterwards Pope Sylvester II., learned the meaning of the cries and the flight of birds.⁴ For in the Middle Ages, Spain, so long the home of Arabian arts and learning, was a favourite abode of enchanters; magic was regularly taught at Toledo, Salamanca, and Seville.⁵ To this day it is hardly possible to walk the narrow, winding, desolate streets of Toledo—perched like an eagle's eyrie in proud isolation from the modern world—without falling under the spell of the Middle Ages, and feeling that behind those white, silent walls the magician may still be working his "enchantments drear".

Grimm has conjectured⁶ that the elevation of Gerbert to the Papal See may have been the origin of a German folk-tale in which a boy who had learned the language of animals rises to be Pope. The story is only one of a widespread group of similar tales, which we will now examine.

Alexander sails through the air in a griffin-car, and says (vv 377 sq.)

*"Et saurai des oisiaux com lor est
convenant
Quant il volent là sus en l'air ki est
ardant."*

¹ Ch. xxvii (vol. ii. p. 100 sq., Palmer's translation).

² G. Weil, *Biblische Legenden der Muselmänner* (Frankfurt, 1845), p. 225 sqq.

³ Lane's *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, i. p. 35.

⁴ William of Malmesbury, *De gestis regum Anglorum*, ii. 10: "*Ibi quid cantus et volatus avium portendit, didicit*"; Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale*, xxiv. 98 (paraphrasing William of Malmesbury): "*Ibi didicit et cantus avium et volatus mysterium.*"

⁵ Sir W. Scott, note on *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Canto ii.; Maury, *La Magie et l'Astrologie dans l'Antiquité et au moyen âge*, p. 216. Magic was even called *scientia Toletana*.

⁶ Note on *Kinder- und Hausmarchen*, No. 33.

In the case of authors who wrote before the invention of printing, scholars are familiar with the process of comparing the various manuscripts of a single work, in order, from such a comparison, to reconstruct the archetype or original MS. from which the various existing MSS. are derived. Similarly in folk-lore, by comparing the different versions of a single tale, it may be possible to arrive with tolerable certainty at the original story, of which the different versions are more or less imperfect and incorrect representations. The story of "The Boy who became Pope" will furnish us with an example of this process of collation in folk-lore. Versions of the story are found in *a*, Italy,¹ *b*, Germany,² *c*, Normandy,³ and *d*, Brittany;⁴ and they all belong to what a palaeographer would call the same family, being undoubtedly derived from one archetype. Other versions of the same story, differing more or less from the preceding and from each other, will be afterwards noticed.

We will first give the archetype, as restored from a comparison of the four versions belonging to the same family. Along with the text of the archetype we will give the most important variations (where they occur) in the different versions, indicating these versions by the letters I. (Italian), G. (German), N. (Norman), and B. (Breton).

The story is that of "The Boy who became Pope, or the Three Languages". A man has a son whom he sends away to be educated. After a time the son returns and is asked what he has learned. He replies "I have learned the language of *dogs*."⁵ He is sent away to school again. After a time he again comes back, and is asked what he has learned. He answers, "The language of *frogs*."⁶ He is sent away to school again. He returns a third time, and is asked what he has learned. He replies, "The language of *birds*."⁷

¹ T. F. Crane, *Popular Italian Tales*, No. xliii.

² Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, No. 33.

³ J. Fleury, *Littérature orale de la Basse-Normandie* (Paris, 1883), p. 123 *sqq.*

⁴ P. Sébillot, *Contes populaires de la Haute-Bretagne*, 2ème Série, No. xxv.

⁵ Frogs N.; dogs, frogs, and birds I (this is simply an abbreviation of what follows, the three visits to school being compressed into one. But in I. the order of the archetype—viz. dogs, frogs, birds—is preserved both here and in what follows).

⁶ Dogs N.; birds G.

⁷ Frogs G.

The father is angry. *He orders*¹ *a man to take the youth into a wood and murder him. The intended assassin pities the youth and lets him go, but brings as a token to his father the heart of a deer,*² *pretending that it is the youth's.*

In his wanderings the youth comes to a dwelling where he is received for the night. The dogs bark, and, understanding the language of dogs, the youth hears them saying that robbers are about to attack the house. He gives warning to the master of the house, and the purpose of the robbers is defeated.³

He comes to a house where a girl is ill. By understanding what the frogs are saying he learns that the girl is ill because she has dropped *something*⁴ which a frog has got hold of. The lost object is rescued from the frog's mouth, and the girl is made well.⁵

He goes to Rome with *two*⁶ companions whom he has met on the way. They hear birds singing on a tree, and the youth understands the birds to say that one of the three fellow-travellers will be made Pope.⁷ At Rome they find that the Pope is dead, and by *a certain sign*⁸ the youth is recognized as the future Pope and elected.

*His father visits him, repents of what he had done, humbles himself before his son, receives his pardon, and lives with his son henceforward.*⁹

¹ He orders . . . pretending that it is the youth's *omitted in B.*

² Heart of a dog I. ; eyes and tongue of a deer G. (For bringing back an animal's heart instead of a person's, compare Fleury, *op cit. La Fille sans Mains*, p. 153)

³ In B. the incident of the dogs and the robbers follows that of the girl and the frogs, agreeably to the order in which in B. the youth learns the three languages. In G. the robbers are omitted, and the dogs bark simply because there is a great treasure in the house, and they can have no rest till it is removed.

⁴ The holy wafer (host) N.B. ; a crucifix I. (which does not say that a frog had got hold of it, but simply that the girl had thrown the crucifix into a fountain).

⁵ In G. the frog incident is abbrev-

viated to this, that the youth hears and understands the croaking of the frogs, and is saddened by what he hears.

⁶ Three I. In I. he meets these companions after, in N.B. before, the adventures with the dogs and frogs. In G. the fellow-travellers do not appear.

⁷ In N. it is only said that what the birds said astonished him, and that he kept the secret to himself. But the meaning is plainly as in the text.

⁸ In G. two white doves alight on his shoulders ; in I. a dove alights on his head ; in B. all the people pass under the bell to see who will be Pope ; when the youth passes under it, the bell rings. In N. a portion of the sky descends on his head.

⁹ His father . . . henceforward *omitted in G.* ; and lives with his son henceforward *omitted in N.*

There are two other Breton versions of the story, which differ more or less from the preceding. *e.* In one called *Pope Innocent*,¹ the son of the King of France predicts that his father will pour water for him to wash his hands, and that his mother will offer him a towel to dry them with. His parents are angry. A man is charged to kill the prince, but lets him go free. Hearing that a Pope is about to be elected, he sets out for Rome. He meets two monks who are also bound thither, and they go together. On the way they have various adventures, which have no parallel in the preceding versions. But the incidents of (1) the castle and robbers, and (2) the girl and the frogs, and (3) the prediction of the birds, all occur, though in (1) the dogs are not mentioned. At Rome the prince's candle takes fire of itself on three successive days, so he is elected Pope. His parents come to Rome to get absolution for their sin; they fulfil their son's prediction; he pardons them, and they live happily together.

f. In another Breton version,² called *The History of Christic, who became Pope at Rome*, the boy Christic makes the same prediction as in the preceding version. A servant is charged to kill him, but brings back a dog's heart instead. Christic has various adventures, of which the only one like the preceding is that of the robbers, and here the dogs reappear. The test for Pope is the same as in the foregoing tale. His parents visit Rome, and the Pope washes their feet.

In neither of these Breton versions is the language of animals distinctly mentioned, though a knowledge of it is implied in the incident of the frogs in the first and perhaps (though less clearly) in that of the dogs in the second.

Further, the general plot of the story occurs in a number of other tales. *g.* In the *History of the Seven Wise Masters of Rome*,³ a certain knight sends his son to be educated by

¹ *Mélusine*, i. (1878), col. 374 sqq. For some of the parallels which follow I am indebted to Dr Reinhold Kohler's notes in *Mélusine*, i. c. 384.

² *Mélusine*, i. col. 300 sqq.

³ I have used the *Historia calumnie novercalis que septem sapientum inscribitur* (Antwerp, 1490); the English translation, reprinted at London, 1688; and the two old French redactions published by Mr. Gaston Paris

(*Deux Rédactions du Roman des Sept Sages de Rome*, publiées par Gaston Paris, Paris, 1876). The *Historia calumnie novercalis*, according to Mr. Paris (preface, p. xi, note) is the same text as the *Historia septem sapientum*, "avec des changements des noms et la suppression de tout ce qui est chrétien". According to him, the second of the French versions is a close translation of the Latin, and the English version

a Master in a far country. After seven years the child returned and as he is sitting at table with his parents a nightingale sings sweetly. The knight marvels at the sweetness of the song and wishes that someone could interpret it. His son says he can do so but fears his father's displeasure. The knight bids him speak out. So the son says: "The bird foretells that I shall become a great lord and that my father shall bring me water to wash and that my mother shall hold the towel." His father in anger throws him into the sea, but he is picked up by a ship, taken to a distant land, and sold to a duke. The king of the country is plagued by three ravens which follow him continually, screaming loudly. He offers his daughter in marriage and the succession to the throne to anyone who shall explain the mystery and rid him of the ravens. The child explains that the ravens are a father, a mother, and a young one; that the mother deserted the young one in a time of scarcity but now claims to exercise a mother's rights over it, while the father-raven, who fed the young one in the time of scarcity, resists the mother's claim; the birds therefore wish the king to decide to whom the young one belongs. The king decides in favour of the father; and the birds fly away. The youth grows up and in time weds the king's daughter. He visits his father and mother, who know him not, but do him reverence; his father offers him water to wash with and his mother presents a towel, as he had foretold. He reveals himself to them, forgives them, and takes them to his kingdom where they dwell in honour and joy.

h. In a French version of the *Seven Wise Masters*,¹ a

is made directly or indirectly from the Latin. But the French version is certainly not a close translation of the *Historia calumnise novecalis* so far as I have compared the two, but differs from it considerably. On the other hand, the French and English translations (so far as I have compared them) agree with each other closely and differ from the Latin, and as in some of these details, where they differ from the Latin, they agree with modern parallels, one can scarcely help concluding that the genuine folk-tale lives independently in these versions, and that the Latin is merely a transla-

tion (and an abridged translation) of a vernacular version. Hence in the story in the text I follow the French and English versions, and neglect the Latin. Mr. G. Paris himself believes that the Latin *Historia septem sapientium* is a translation of an older French version. The general question of the relation of the different versions of *The Seven Wise Masters* seems to be very complex and I do not pretend to enter on it.

¹ The version is the first of the two French versions published by Mr. G. Paris, *op. cit.* pp. 47-50.

fisherman is out fishing with his son. Hearing some birds shrieking, the father asks what it means, the son interprets their cries as the boy in the previous version interprets the nightingale. His father flings him into the sea, and the rest follows as before, except that the question between the ravens is, which of two males shall have the hen-bird to wife; the old male had been her mate but had deserted her in a time of scarcity, when the younger male had fed and cherished her. The king decides for the younger male.

2. In a Russian version ¹ which reproduces very closely the former version of the *Seven Wise Masters*, a man hears a nightingale singing a sad song and wishes that someone could interpret it. His son, a child of six, says that he knows what the nightingale is singing but fears to tell. His father bids him speak out. His son says: "The bird says that a day will come when you will serve me; my father will pour water for me and my mother will offer the towel." His parents, enraged, set him adrift on the sea in a little boat. He is picked up by a ship and brought to a country where the king is plagued by three ravens, and the rest follows as in the *Seven Wise Masters*; the question between the ravens being, as in the first case, whether the young one belongs to the father or mother, and the king deciding for the father. The son's visit to his parents and the fulfilment of his prediction as to the water and the towel also follow as before.

3. In a Masurian version ² a merchant sends his son to a master to learn the language of birds. On his return his father hears him conversing with a lark. With some difficulty the son is persuaded to tell what the lark said to him, "When you come back you will be a rich man but your father will be poor; your mother will wash your feet and your father will drink the water." His parents are angry and give him to a merchant to kill. The merchant takes the lad away in his ship but does not kill him. They come to England, where the king's son and daughter are ill of a scurf. The lad explains that at the holy communion the prince and princess had thrown on the ground the consecrated bread which had been swallowed by a toad. The toad is caught and boiled and the

¹ L. Leger, *Contes populaires slaves*, No. xxxi. (from Afanasief).

² M. Toeppen, *Aberglauben aus Masuren*,² p. 150 sqq.

children are cured. The king gives the lad his daughter to wife and the kingdom to boot. He now goes to visit his parents, finds them very poor, and his prediction is fulfilled.

l. In a Basque version ¹ a son hears a voice saying that his parents will one day be his servants. His parents are angry and give him to two servants to kill; the servants, however, let him go and bring back a dog's heart in token that they had killed the lad. The youth sets out for Rome, meets two men also bound thither, and they all go together. They lodge for the night in a house, which turns out to be an abode of robbers. The young man is warned by a voice, and the three escape from the robbers. Next they come to a house where a girl is very ill; the young man cures her.² As the travellers approach Rome, all the bells begin to ring of themselves; so the lad is made Pope. His father and mother come to Rome to get pardon of their sin; the son recognizes and forgives them, and they die of joy.

m. In another Basque version ³ a ship-captain asks his son what he has learned at school. The son says that he has learned to understand the songs of birds. His father takes him on a voyage. A bird perches on the ship and sings. The father asks what the bird says. The son answers: "He sings that I am now under your orders, but you shall also be under mine." The captain puts his son into a barrel and flings it into the sea. The barrel is cast up on a shore, the boy is taken out and marries the daughter of the king of that country. One day the boy's father is caught in a storm and driven on shore. He goes to the king, his son, but does not recognize him and becomes his son's servant. In time the son reveals himself and they live together happily.

n. In a Teleut version ⁴ a man sends his son to school. When the boy's schooling is over, his father fetches him home. On their way home they hear birds singing and the father asks his son what they are saying. The son says:

¹ Wentworth Webster, *Basque Legends*, p. 137 sqq.

² The Basque narrator forgot how the cure was effected. From a comparison of the Norman, Breton (Sébillot), Italian, and Masurian versions, we may conjecture that the girl had dropped the communion bread

which had been swallowed by a toad, and that the cure was effected by recovering the bread from the toad.

³ W. Webster, *Basque Legends*, p. 136 sq.

⁴ W. Radloff, *Proben der Volksliteratur der türkischen Stämme Süd-Sibiriens*, i. p. 208 sqq.

"If I tell you, you will be angry." But his father bids him speak out, so he says: "The birds said that I shall be emperor one day and that you will come to my castle and suffer a great indignity." His father is angry and cuts off his son's head; also he cuts off his horse's head, wraps his son's body in the horse's hide, and throws it into the sea. The body is cast ashore; an old woman finds it, opens the hide, and the youth comes forth alive. The king of this land is dead and has left no son. Two golden posts with a candle on the top of each are set up in the village, and everyone has to jump between them. He is to be king upon whom the two candles fall. They fall upon the youth *and take fire*,¹ so he is made king. The father comes to his son's palace and suffers the indignity his son had foretold. The son reveals himself and treats his father and mother well.

The king's decision between the ravens in *g*, *h*, *i*, occurs in a modern Indian folk-tale. Considering that this incident occurs in the *Seven Wise Masters* and in a modern Indian tale, it is remarkable that it does not appear to occur in Sindibad,² the oriental original of the *Seven Wise Masters*. The Indian story is as follows: Three birds came day after day to a court of justice. The Raja asked his minister what this meant. "I haven't the slightest idea," said the prime minister. "If you don't know by to-morrow," said the Raja, "I will cut off your head." The minister learned the

¹ Thus the test is the same as in the two Breton versions of "The Boy who became Pope". The same test (candle lighting of itself) occurs in a Russian tale (Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology*, 1 p 318). In a Swahili tale a young slave comes to a city where the sultan has just died and a new sultan is about to be elected. "They used to throw a lime, and whoever it struck three times, he was the sultan." The lime falls on the slave three times, so he is made sultan (E. Steere, *Swahili Tales*, pp. 141, 143). Dr Krapf was told by a priest of Gurague that in the Kingdom of Senjero (south of Abyssinia) it was the custom after the death of a king "for the chief men of the kingdom to assemble outside the city, in an open field, and

wait till a vulture or an insect settled on one of the assembly; and he to whom this happened was unanimously elected king" (J. L. Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa*, p. 68). This statement, however, was contradicted by another witness whom Dr Krapf questioned.

² At least I have not found it in the Greek (*Fabulae Romanenses*, ed A. Eberhard, 1872), the Syriac (as translated by F Baethgen, *Sindban, oder die Sieben weisen Meister, Syrisch und deutsch*, 1879), nor the Arabic (as represented by the old Spanish translation appended to Comparetti's *Researches respecting the book of Sindibad*, translated for the Folk-lore Society, London, 1882).

secret from his gardener, who was a fool but understood the bird language and had heard the dispute between the birds. The hen-bird had seen her mate walking with another hen and, suspecting him of bigamy, said: "Let her alone." The cock declined to do so, and they had gone to law. The Raja decided in favour of monogamy by holding up one finger; so the second hen flew away, and the old couple departed together.¹

So in a Kirghiz story a Khan orders his vizier under pain of death to tell him what three geese have just said; the vizier cannot, but is saved by the Khan's daughter, who knows the goose language.²

In the *Pentamerone* there is a story which begins somewhat like "The boy who became Pope". A man has five simple sons, whom he sends into the world to brighten their wits. They come back, each with an accomplishment; the youngest understands the language of birds.³

In most stories, a knowledge of the beast language stands its possessor in good stead. In a Kalmuck tale two dragon-frogs dam up the source of a river and only allow it to flow on condition of receiving annually a human victim. The fatal lot having fallen on the Khan, his son takes his place and goes with his devoted friend as a sacrifice to the frogs. But the prince understands the language of all creatures and hears the frogs saying to each other: "If they were only to knock our heads off with a stick, and if the prince were to eat me, the golden-yellow frog, and his friend were to eat you, the emerald-green frog, they would spit nothing but gold and gems, and there would be no need of victims to the frogs hereafter." The prince takes the hint, and the result answers to the prediction.⁴ This story of the release of the water seems to be another form of that myth of the slaying of the frog who had swallowed the waters which Mr. Andrew Lang has traced in North America, Australia, and the

¹ *Indian Antiquary*, iii. p. 320 sq.

² W. Radloff, *Proben, etc*, iii. p. 347 sqq.

³ Basile, *Pentamerone*, v. 7 (vol. ii. p. 212 sq. Liebrecht's German translation).

⁴ B. Julg, *Kalmuksche Märchen*,

die *Siddhi-Kür*, No. ii. (p. 10 sq.); *Sagas from the Far East* (London, 1873), p. 18 sqq. In the latter version serpents take the place of frogs. Julg translates *Drachenfrösche* in the first instance and then *Frosch* and *Frösche* always.

Andaman Islands.¹ Again, in an Indian story a knowledge of the language of animals, which he has learned from the goddess Kali, saves a prince from a great crime which he was about unconsciously to commit.² In other Indian stories heroes woo princesses on the strength of their knowledge of the animal language.³ A Zulu who understood the language of birds was able to predict the nature of the seasons through information received from a wagtail.⁴ In an old English version of the *Gesta Romanorum* three knights are sent by the Emperor Ancelmus to take a castle. One of the knights, "a grete geve of counseille", understands the "passing swete sonet-song" of a nightingale, which warns him that thieves are lying in wait in the wood.⁵ In a Tibetan story, "Oxen as Witnesses", a ploughman is done a very good turn by the oxen with which he ploughs; but it is not quite clear whether the language in which they address him is human or bovine.⁶

Sometimes, however, this gift of tongues proves dangerous or even fatal to its possessor. A friend of Porphyry's had a slave-boy who knew the language of all birds; but his mother, fearing lest the youthful prodigy should be sent as a present to the emperor, fouled his ears, and he never understood the bird speech again.⁷ In an Esthonian story a youth, craving after knowledge, learns the bird speech and

¹ A. Lang, *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, i. p. 39 sqq. A tribe of Indians on the Orinoco is said to have kept frogs under vessels for the purpose of obtaining from them rain or fine weather, as occasion required; if their prayers were not answered, they beat the frogs. See *Colombia, being a geographical, etc., account of that country* (London, 1822), vol. i. p. 642 sq.

² *The Dravidian Nights Entertainments: being a translation of Madanakamarajankadai*, by Pandit S. M. Natesi Sastru (Madras, 1886), p. 50 sq.

³ *The Katha Sarit Sāgara*, translated from the original Sanskrit by C. H. Tawney, i. p. 499; ii. p. 276.

⁴ H. Callaway, *Nursery Tales of the Zulus*, p. 130 sqq.

⁵ *Gesta Romanorum, Old English Versions*, edited by Sir Frederic Madden (London, 1838), p. 47 (p. 55 of Herrtage's edition, London, 1879). The corresponding story in the continental Latin version of the *Gesta Romanorum* is No. 130 (p. 484 ed Oesterley), but it does not contain the incident of the nightingale.

⁶ *Tibetan Tales*, Schiefner and Ralston, No. xxx. On p. 317 it is said that not long after the creation of the world "even brute beasts could speak", which makes for human language; but on p. 318 it is said that the oxen could not speak the language of men.

⁷ Porphyry, *De abst* in 3 καθ' ἑδοντος εἰς τὰ βρα εὐουρησάντος. Compare the way in which swallows are thought to cause blindness (Basile's *Pentamerone* (Liebrecht), i. p. 403, ii. p. 59).

other strange lore ; but all his knowledge proves unsatisfying, and he pines away.¹ In a folk-tale of Bengal a woman enjoys " the rare faculty of understanding the language of beasts ", whereby she finds great treasure , but neither her husband nor anyone else knows of her accomplishment, so she incurs the suspicion of being a Rakshasi, or vampire, and is knocked on the head.² In a Mongolian story a king sends his son to the Diamond Kingdom of Central India to be educated. The youth is accompanied by the minister's son. On their return from the Diamond Kingdom they pass through a thirsty desert, where the prince, understanding the voice of a crow, finds water. The minister's son, jealous of the prince's superior wisdom, kills him.³

Thus far we have had examples of the possession of the animal language. We have now to see the ways in which a knowledge of that language is acquired. Of course when a person has animal blood in him, as often happens in folk-lore, it is natural enough that he should understand the language of his kindred. Thus a child found in a wolf's den and said to be a wolf-child understands the wolves when they howl ;⁴ and a Russian epic hero, whose father was a serpent, understands the language of birds, beasts, and fishes.⁵ But the usual means of acquiring the animal language are (a) magic rings, (b) magic plants, and (c) serpents.

(a) In " the story of Cambuscan bold ", besides the present of " the wondrous horse of brass " for Cambuscan, the king of Araby and Inde sends to Canace a magic mirror and ring.

*" The vertu of the ryng, if ye wol heere,
Is thus, that if hire lust it for to were
Upon hir thomb, or in hir purs to bere,
Ther is no fowel that fleeth under the hevene,
That she ne shal wel understonde his stevene,
And knowe his menyng openly and pleyne,
And answeere hym in his langage ageyn ;*

¹ Fr. Kreutzwald, *Ehstnische Mährchen, aus dem Ehstnischen übersetzt* von F. Lowe (Halle, 1869), p. 25 sqq.

² Lal Behari Day, *Folk-tales of Bengal*, No. x.

³ B. Julg, *Siddhi-Kür* (Innsbruck, 1868), No. xv. ; *Sagas from the Far*

East, p. 157 sqq. ; X. Marmier, *Contes populaires de différentes pays*, 2ème Série, p. 252 sqq.

⁴ *Sagas from the Far East* (London, 1873), p. 277 sq.

⁵ A. Rambaud, *La Russie épique*, p. 31.

*And every gras that groweth upon roote
She shal eek knowe, and whom it wol do boote,
Al be hise woundes never so depe and wyde "*¹

In a German story² a prince comes to a castle where all the people are fast asleep. In a hall of the castle he finds a table, and on the table a golden ring. A silver inscription on the table declares that whoever puts the ring in his mouth will understand the language of birds. Afterwards the prince puts the ring in his mouth and thus, by understanding what three crows are saying, he is saved from death and recovers his eyesight.

(b) A Swabian legend says that three witches of Heiligen-thal culled simples in the woods and fields, and one of these simples imparted a knowledge of the language of animals.³ In an Italian story a man, plucking some grass at random, suddenly finds that he understands what the birds are saying. He hears one of them tell where a treasure is to be found. He then drops the grass and immediately ceases to understand the birds; he looks for the grass but never finds it again. However, he finds the treasure in the place described by the bird.⁴ In an Esthonian story a girl has learned in her youth the language of birds from an old woman, and her eldest sister imparts a knowledge of the bird language to a prince by giving him to eat a cake composed of meal, pork, and certain herbs, the magic virtue residing in the herbs.⁵ In Brittany there is a plant called the golden herb (*herbe d'or*) because it shines from afar like gold. If anyone happens to tread on it, he at once falls asleep and understands the language of birds, dogs, wolves, and so on. The plant is seldom found and never but at the peep of dawn; it can be gathered only by holy people and with certain mystic rites.⁶

But the plant which is most commonly supposed to impart

¹ Chaucer, *Squire's Tale*, vv. 146-155.

² J. W. Wolf, *Deutsche Hausmarchen* (Gottingen and Leipzig, 1851), p. 148 sqq.

³ A. Birlinger, *Volksthümliches aus Schwaben*, i. p. 1.

⁴ Morlini, *Novellae*, No. 60.

⁵ Fr. Kreutzwald, *Ehstnische Mährchen* (Halle, 1869), pp. i, 7, 14 sq. Gubernatis (*Zoological Mythology*,

i. p. 152) wrongly attributes the magic influence to the pork. The words are plain: "*Mein Schwesnefleischkuchen von Gestern . . . war mit Zauberkräutern gefüllt, welche euch in den Stand setzen, Alles zu verstehen, was die klugen Vögel unter einander reden.*"

⁶ Laisnel de la Salle, *Croyances et légendes du centre de la France*, i. p. 233, quoting Villemarqué, *Barzaz-Breiz*, i. pp. 102, 187.

a knowledge of the language of animals is the fern. In a German story¹ a cowherd lost his cows, and as he trudged through the grass in search of them, his great shoes (such as people wore long ago) got filled with fern seed.² Suddenly he heard the calf saying that a certain ale-house would sink into the ground. The dog asked, "How long will it last?" and the cock answered, "Till the end of the week." But the cowherd shook the fern seed out of his shoes and heard no more. And in a week's time down sank the ale-house into an abyss. Similar stories are told by the South Slavonians and the Wends. In the South Slavonian version³ a cowherd lost two of his oxen on the Eve of St. John (Midsummer Eve), which is the only time when fern seed possesses this magic power. At last he espied his oxen lying on a bed of fern. Approaching them softly he was surprised to hear the older ox telling the younger ox that he (the elder ox) would be killed in the autumn, and that in the spring their master would be attacked by a snake, and could only be saved by the cowherd. All came to pass as the ox had foretold, but the cowherd never knew how just at that moment he had understood the ox language. The reason was that fern seed had fallen into his shoe without his noticing it; for if he had seen it, he certainly would not have understood what the oxen said. In the Wend story⁴ a man was herding horses, and the bloom of the fern, which blooms only at midnight, fell into his shoe. Next morning when he came home he told his friends what the geese had been talking about. This was noised abroad, and the squire sent for him. To smarten himself up he took off his shoes and put on better ones, and from that moment he knew nothing of the goose language.

¹ A. Kuhn, *Markische Sagen und Marchen*, p. 61.

² *Reenefare*, which (the story being given in the original dialect) Kuhn explains to be *Rainfarren*, which again Lucas in his German dictionary explains to be "common tansy". But Kuhn and Schwartz (*Norddeutsche Sagen, Marchen und Gebrauche*, p. 487), referring to this same story, speak of the plant in question as *Farnsame*, i.e. fern seed. I therefore

take it so in the text. The word *Peer* which I translate "cow" seems to = *fersa*, "cow". See G. Curtius, *Griech. Etymol.*, p. 282. For in the dialect in which the story is written, "p" repeatedly takes the place of "f"; e.g. *eloopen* = *gelaufen*, *deepe* = *tiefe*.

³ F. S. Krauss, *Sagen und Marchen der Sudslaven*, ii. No. 159.

⁴ W. von Schulenburg, *Wendische Volkssagen und Gebräuche* (Leipzig, 1880), p. 82, compare p. 269.

Of the many other mystic properties of the fern,¹ there is only one which it is desirable to mention in connexion with the language of animals. Fern seed or fern bloom is supposed to render the person who carries it invisible; but it is found only on Midsummer Eve, when it shines like burnished gold, but quickly fades and falls, not to be found again.² The stories told of the invisibility conferred by fern seed resemble those told of its power of revealing the language of animals. A man was looking for a strayed foal on Midsummer Eve; and as he went through a meadow, fern seed fell into his shoes. In the morning he came home and sat down in the parlour. But it seemed strange that neither his wife nor anybody else paid any heed to him. Then he said, "I did not find the foal after all." Everyone in the room shuddered visibly, for they heard the man's voice but did not see him. His wife shouted his name. He stood up in the middle of the room and said, "What are you shouting for? Here I am close beside you." This only added to the general alarm. But now he felt something like sand in his shoes. Scarcely had he taken them off and shaken them, when he stood visible before the eyes of all.³

¹ Compare Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*,⁴ p 1012; Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube*,² §§ 123-125; Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren*, §§ 673-676; H Friend, *Flowers and Flower Lore*,³ pp. 60, 78, 279-283, 360-362; Gubernatis, *Mythologie des Planètes*, i. p. 188 sq., ii 143 sqq.; Boecler-Kreutzwald, *Der Ehesten abergläubische etc*, pp. 2, 74, 87, 144; A. Kuhn, *Herabkunft des Feuers*,² pp. 192-197; I. V Zingerle, *Sitten, Gebräuche, und Meinungen des Tiroler Volkes*,² §§ 882, 1573; Von Alpbensburg, *Mythen und Sagen Tirols*, p 407 sq.; A Birlinger, *Volkskümliches aus Schwaben*, i. pp 333 sq., 340, ii. p. 103; E. Meier, *Deutsche Sagen, Sitten und Gebräuche aus Schwaben*, p. 243 sq.; Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 98 sq.; Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Fest-Kalender aus Böhmen*, p. 311 sq.

² A. Wuttke, *op. cit.* § 123; F. J. Vonbun, *Beiträge zur deutschen Mythologie*, p. 133 sq.; H. Friend, *op.*

cit p 362; A. de Gubernatis, *Myth. des Planètes*, ii. 144 sq.; A. Kuhn, *Herabkunft des Feuers*,² p 196; Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren*, § 675

³ Grimm, *D M* p 1012; A. Kuhn, *Sagen, Gebräuche und Märchen aus Westfalen*, i. p 276; L. Bechstein, *Thüringer Sagenbuch*,² No 67. For a different story to the same effect, see A. Kuhn, *Markische Sagen und Märchen*, p 206 sq (a peasant, driving with his wife, gets down; fern seed falls into his shoes, he becomes invisible, and sits invisible beside his wife in the waggon, on taking off his shoes he reappears). Again similar stories are told of how fern seed gives a knowledge of hidden treasure. In an Austrian story a man is looking for his lost cow on Midsummer Eve; fern seed falls into his shoes, the existence of an underground treasure is revealed to him; he hurries home to get tools with which to dig it up; takes off his

(c) But most commonly it is a serpent which conveys a knowledge of the language of animals. The ways in which it does so are various. The application of the magic influence may be external or internal, and the external application may be made either to the ears or to the mouth. Applied to the *ears*, the charm seems meant to impart the power of *understanding* the speech of animals; applied to the *mouth*, it may give the additional power of *speaking* the animal language. But this distinction is not perhaps to be pressed.

We begin with the application of serpents to the ears. The way in which the Greek soothsayer Melampus became master of his art was, according to Apollodorus,¹ as follows. He was staying in the country, and in front of the house was an oak-tree, in which serpents had made their lair. The servants killed the old serpents and Melampus gathered sticks and burned their carcasses. But the young serpents he reared. And when they were grown, one day as he slept, they crept on his shoulders and cleansed his ears with their tongue. He started up in a fright, and lo! he understood the voices of the birds as they flew overhead, and by what he learned from them he was able to foretell events. But it was not the birds only that he understood. For once being caught cattle-lifting he was laid by the heels by Bias, the owner of the cattle; and as he lay in durance vile he heard the worms in the roof talking to one another. One worm said, "How much of the beam have we eaten through?" and the other said, "Oh! there is only a little bit left." So he warned Bias that the house was coming down, and scarcely had they cleared out when sure enough down it came.²

The account given by the scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius³ of the way in which Melampus learned the language of animals is fuller than that of Apollodorus; and from it we

shoes, and forgets where the treasure is (Vernaleken, *Mythen und Brauche des Volkes in Oesterreich*, p. 310). There are similar Russian stories. In one of them it is the man's wife, who, seeing that his feet are wet, tells him to change his stockings, he does so, with the result as before. In another, it is the devil who persuades the man to change shoes with him (Guber-

natis, *Mythologie des Plantes*, i. p. 189, Compare M. Toeppen, *Aberglaube aus Masuren*,⁴ p. 72 sq.).

¹ Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, i. 9. 11; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* x. 137.

² Apollodorus, i. 9. 12.

³ Scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, I. 118, vol. ii. p. 7, ed. A. Wellauer (Leipzig, 1828).

learn that when the serpents were killed, Melampus was not in his own house but was staying with a friend, and that the killing of the serpents (or serpent) was the doing of his friend and not of Melampus, who, on the other hand, piously burned the serpent's body and reared its young. Thus the burning of the serpents in Apollodorus must have been, not a mark of contempt, but a solemn funeral rite; and so the benefit which the young snakes afterwards conferred on Melampus may have been meant as a return quite as much for the respect he had shown to their parents as for the lives they themselves owed to him. Helenus and Cassandra acquired their prophetic power in like manner. As children they were left overnight in the temple of Apollo, and in the morning serpents were found licking their ears.¹ Porphyry says that perhaps we and all men might understand the language of all the animals if a serpent had washed our ears.² Tiresias received a knowledge of the language of birds from Athene, who cleansed his ears;³ and when we remember how closely Athene was associated with the serpent,⁴ we can hardly be rash in including Tiresias among the serpent-taught seers, or rather hearers. The sacred snakes in the temple of Athene⁵ may very well have done for Tiresias what the snakes did for Helenus and Cassandra in the temple of Apollo. This application of serpents to the ears seems to be exclusively classical; at least I have found no example of it outside of Greek and Latin literature.⁶ The reason why soothsayers are supposed to be specially acquainted with the language of birds is that omens are very commonly taken

¹ Schol. on Euripides, *Hecuba*, 86; Schol. on Homer, *Iliad*, vii 44; Tzetzes, *Schol in Lycophr* i. p. 266 sq, ed. Muller. It is implied in these passages that there were serpents in the temple of Apollo. For another example of sacred snakes in a sanctuary of Apollo, see Aelian, *De natura animalium*, xi. 2. The soothsayer Iamus was a son of Apollo and in his youth two snakes fed him with honey (Pindar, *Olymp.* vi 45).

² Porphyry, *De abst.* iii. 4.

³ Apollodorus, iii 6. 7

⁴ See J. C. F. Baehr on Herodotus, vii. 41.

⁵ Besides Baehr, *loc cit.*, see K. Bötticher, *Die Tektonik der Hellenen*,² p 389

⁶ At Woburn Abbey there is a Greek marble relief representing two ears with a serpent at each, the head of each serpent resting just above the top of each ear. The inscription is mutilated, the only word to be made out with certainty being ΕΤΧΑΠΙΣΤΗΠΙΟΝ. The tablet is probably a thank-offering for the cure of some defect of the ears. See *Archäologische Zeitung*, 1864, plate facing p 211.

from birds. In Greek, Arabic, and Dyak the words for "bird" are used in the sense of "omen".¹

The *mouth* as the point of application of the serpent-charm appears in a Slavonian story,² which runs thus. A shepherd tending his flock heard a hissing, and perceived a serpent in the midst of flames. He saved the serpent from the fire, and the grateful snake led him to the abode of his³ father, who was king of the serpents. On the way the rescued snake said to the shepherd, "My father will offer you silver, gold, and gems. But don't take them. Ask only to understand the language of animals. He will make a pother about giving it, but in the end you will get it." But when the shepherd asked the king of the serpents for the animal language, the king said, "That is not for you; if I give you it and you tell anyone, you will die on the spot." But the shepherd persisted, so the king spat thrice into the shepherd's mouth⁴ and the shepherd spat thrice into the king's mouth. Thus the shepherd received the language of animals,⁵ and as he

¹ Aristophanes, *Birds*, 720; J Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentumes*, p 148, *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, No 10, p 229

² W. S Karadschitsch, *Völkermärchen der Serben* (Berlin, 1854), No 3, pp. 17 sqq.; *Serbian Folk-tales*, selected and translated by Madam Csedomille Myatovich, edited by the Rev. W. Denton (London, 1874), pp. 37 sqq.; L. Leger, *Contes populaires slaves* (Paris, 1882), No xi.; F. S. Krauss, *Sagen und Märchen der Sudslaven* (Leipzig, 1883), i. No 97.

³ Or *her*; the rescued snake is male in the versions of Krauss and Leger, female in that of Karadschitsch

⁴ In the Banks' Islands (Melanesia) serpents are said to put their tongues into the mouths of men who are their familiars (*Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, x. p 277). To spit upon the idol's tongue is a mode of salutation in West Africa (A Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste*, i. p. 90).

⁵ With the opening of this Slavonian story compare the following. In a Swahili tale a woman befriends a

snake, who in return takes her to its parents, with whom she lives many days. When she is coming away, the snake whom she befriended warns her to accept no present from the snake-parents save the father's ring and the mother's casket. The snake-parents offer her wealth, but she persists in asking for the ring and casket. The snake-parents are very sorry and give her the ring and casket unwillingly. The ring has the magic virtue of supplying clothes, food, and a house at discretion, the virtues of the casket are not specified (E. Steere, *Swahili Tales*, London, 1870, p. 403 sqq.). In a Tarantschi-Tartar story a young man saves a serpent from death. The serpent takes his benefactor to his father, the serpent-king, and advises the young man to ask for the serpent-king's ring. The serpent-king in gratitude for the kindness done to his son offers the man gold and silver, but he refuses and asks for the serpent-king's ring. The king is very sorry and tries to persuade the young man to take anything but the ring; at last, however, he gives it. The ring is a wishing-ring; whatever

went back he understood the voices of the birds, the grasses, and indeed, of everything in the world. Hearing two ravens describing a buried treasure he dug it up, became a rich man, and married a wife. Once on a time he went on a journey with his wife. He rode a horse and she rode a mare, and the mare fell behind the horse. The horse called out to the mare, "Step out faster. How you lag behind!" But the mare answered, "It is easy for you, since you only carry one; but I carry three, for my mistress is pregnant and so am I." The man understanding this conversation laughed. His wife asked him why he laughed, but he refused to tell her, saying that it would cost him his life to do so. But she persisted. So when they were come home, wearied with her importunity, he ordered his coffin and lay down in it, ready, as soon as the fatal words had passed his lips, to give up the ghost. Seeing his dog sitting beside the coffin, he called to his wife to throw the dog a bit of bread. The faithful dog would not look at it, but the cock came and picked at it. "Oh, you brute!" said the dog to the cock, "to be guzzling like that when you see your master is dying." "Let him die," said the cock, "the fool! I have a hundred wives and yet by a judicious system of punishment I keep them all in the most exact order; *he* has but one and he can't make her hold her tongue." At these words the man stepped out of his coffin, took a stick, and beating his wife black and blue prevailed on her to stop.

This tale may be traced, with variations of detail, right across the old world from Italy and Finland on the one side to Annam on the other.

An Indian version of it is quoted by Adolf Bastian¹ from the *Nonthuk pakarana*, a Siamese version or imitation of the *Panchatantra*.² A king saves the daughter of a Naga prince

the owner of it desires, he gets (W. Radloff, *Proben der Volksliteratur der nordlichen turkischen Stamme*, vi. p. 172 sqq.). In an Indian story, a young man treats a serpent kindly; the rest follows as before, the serpent-king remarking as he gives the ring, "Thus ring I would not have given even to Indra if he had requested this of me" (*The Dravidian Nights Entertainments*, by

Pandit S. M. Natesi Sastri, pp. 23-27).

¹ *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, i. p. 152.

² Adolf Bastian, in *Orient und Occident*, vol. iii. (1865), p. 171; J. Hertel, *Das Panchatantra* (Leipzig, 1914), p. 338. I have to thank my learned friend Professor Sylvain Lévi of the Collège de France for enabling me to identify the *Nonthuk pakarana*, which I could not do when this essay

from marrying beneath her rank; and in gratitude the Naga prince teaches the king the language of animals. His wife asks him why he laughed, and he gives himself up for lost, till he learns a lesson from the billy-goat and his treatment of his goat-wives. In this version the Naga prince answers to the king of serpents in the Slavonian version, for the Nagas were mythical beings, half human, half serpentine in form; indeed, Naga often stands for a common serpent.¹

We next meet the story in the *Arabian Nights*.² There was a certain merchant, whom God endowed with a knowledge of the language of beasts and birds. He dwelt in the country, and in his house were an ass and a bull. Now the ass had little to do and fared sumptuously, but the bull toiled at ploughing. So when the bull bewailed his hard fate, the ass told him to feign sickness and then he would be allowed to stay at home in peace. But the merchant hearkened to these words and laid them up in his heart. And next day when the bull flopped down under the weight of the plough as though he were weak and ill, the merchant commanded and they took the ass and put him to the plough, and he drew it up and down all day long till the evening. And the next day he did likewise, and his neck was galled and raw, and he himself was reduced to an extreme state of weakness. When he came back in the evening, the bull thanked and praised him for his noble conduct. But the ass said, "Know that I am one who would give thee good advice. I heard our master say, 'If the bull rise not from his place, take him to the butcher that he may kill him.' I am therefore in fear for thee, and so I have given thee good advice, and peace be on thee." So next day when

was originally published in 1888. This Siamese collection contains between eighty and ninety stories, which seem to be translated from the Sanscrit. It takes its name from the wise ox Nonthuk which plays the chief part in the longest of the tales. The stories are woven into each other in the style of the *Panchatantra* and the *Arabian Nights*. They are put into the mouth of the princess Kankra, who entertains the King of Pataliput (Palibothra) with her story-telling in

order to save her father's life. See A. Bastian, *loc. cit.* A selection from the stories is given by Bastian in a German translation (*Orient und Occident*, III. 479-498), but it does not include the tale about the language of animals.

¹ Monier Williams, *Religious Life and Thought in India*, p. 321 sq. Of course the mythical Nagas are to be distinguished from the tribes of the same name in Assam.

² Lane's translation, vol. i. p. 10 sqq. (ed. 1859).

his driver came, the bull pranced and shook his tail and bounded about ; and the merchant beheld him and laughed till he fell backward. Then his wife asked him why he laughed. But he said, " Ask me not, for if I tell thee I must surely die." But she urged him. So he sent for the kadi that he might make his will. And he went into the stable that he might perform his ablution before he died. There he heard the dog reviling the cock and saying, " Art thou happy when our master is going to die ? " But the cock replied, " By Allah ! our master has little sense. *I* have fifty wives ; and I please this one and provoke that ; while *he* has but one wife and cannot manage her ; why does he not take some twigs of the mulberry-tree and beat her till she dies or repents ? " And the merchant did so and beat her till she repented, and they lived together in the happiest manner till death.

In Europe the story seems to appear first in the Latin *Novellae* of Morlini, published at Naples in 1520, and reprinted by Jannet at Paris in 1855. In this Neopolitan version ¹ a man is leading his wife on a she-ass, and the ass's foal follows lagging behind. The foal remonstrates with its mother for going so fast, and the mother answers much as the mare answers in the Slavonian tale. The husband who understands the speech of reptiles and quadrupeds (it is not said how he learned it) laughs on hearing this conversation, and the rest follows as in the Arabian and Slavonian stories. A few touches of local colour are put in " to give artistic verisimilitude to a bald and unconvincing narrative " ; thus a confessor is substituted for the kadi, and the cock's speech is embellished with a quotation from the *Politics* of Aristotle.

The story, translated from Morlini, next appears in the second part of the Italian tales (*Piacevoli Notti*) of Straparola, published at Venice in 1554.²

The Slavonian version, first published in the original by Karadschitsch in 1852, has been already given.

¹ No. lxxi., *De Puteolano qui animalium loquelam intelligebat.*

² The French translation of Straparola by Louveau and Larivey has been

often reprinted. I have used the edition of 1857. See *Les Nuits facétieuses de Straparola*, traduites par J. Louveau et P. Larivey (Paris, 1857), vol. II. pp. 326-329.

The Annamite version, differing considerably from all the foregoing, was published in 1885.¹ A man once saw two serpents in their hole. The female was casting her slough, and the male waited on her. Another time it was the male that was casting his slough; but instead of looking after him the female went gadding about. Indignant at her misconduct the man shot her. The male serpent discovered her slayer by the arrow, and lay in wait to kill him. But the man happened to tell his wife what he had seen, the serpent, listening in the background, recognized the justice of the man's conduct, and out of gratitude brought him his precious stone. All serpents have such a stone in their mouths, and whoever possesses it understands the language of animals. But the man durst not tell his wife of the new gift he had acquired, for if he did so the stone would vanish. One day his wife went into a corner of the house where there were some ants. The ants scrambled out of her way, and the man heard them say to each other, "Come, let us climb up to a place of safety." He laughed. His wife wished to know why he laughed, but he steadily refused to tell her, and she died of vexation.

The Tarantschi-Tartar version was published in 1886.² A man learns the animal speech from a man who knows the languages of all animals, and who warns his pupil that if he divulges the secret he must die. Thus warned, the man hears the dog and cat talking, and laughs, and when his wife plagues him with asking why he laughed, he beats her and she stops asking. But one day he hears the ass and the oxen talking, as in the *Arabian Nights* version; the ass advises the oxen, who have been ploughing, to feign sickness; one of the oxen does so; the ass is put to the plough in his stead, and after ploughing tells the ox that their master will kill him if he continues to feign illness. Hearing this the man laughs; his wife asks him why. In vain he tells the fatal consequences of answering her question. She persists; so he tells her and dies.

Lastly, the Finnish version appeared, in a German transla-

¹ No. lxxix. of A. Landes' "Contes et légendes annamites", in *Cochin-chine française: Excursions et Reconnaissances*, x. No. 23 (Saigon, 1885), pp. 68-69, "Le langage des animaux".

² W. Radloff, *Proben der Volksliteratur der nördlichen türkischen Stämme*, vi. p. 250 sqq. (St. Petersburg, 1886).

tion, in 1887.¹ A hunter saves a serpent from being burned in a stove, and the serpent out of gratitude teaches the hunter the language of birds, animals, plants, and trees ; but warns him that if he reveals the secret he must die. From hearing the fir-trees talk he finds a great treasure, becomes rich, and marries. One day he hears a mother sparrow telling her young ones to pick the seeds from the plants and not from the ground. At this he laughs ; his wife pesters him to tell her why ; he lies down to die, but hearing the cock making the usual speech (in this case not addressed to a dog but delivered as a soliloquy) about his fifty wives, he jumps up and makes a grab at his wife's head. She escapes, but troubles him no more with questions.

In a Russian story ² a hunter saves a serpent from burning and receives from him the animal language on condition of revealing it to no one under pain of death. In a French story a shepherd carries a strayed serpent, who is the king of animals, back to the "wood of the animals", and receives the language of animals on the usual condition.³

So far the animal language has been the free gift of a living serpent. But oftener it is acquired by eating a part of a dead serpent. Democritus, as reported by Pliny, said that whoever ate a serpent would understand the language of birds.⁴ Philostratus thought that the Arabs gained a knowledge of the bird language by eating the heart or liver of a serpent,⁵ and he says that in the same way the people of Paraka in India understood the language of animals in general.⁶ Miss Gordon Cumming has been informed that "to this day both Arabs and Hindoos eat the heart and liver of serpents, hoping thereby to acquire a knowledge of the language of animals".⁷ But perhaps her informant had Philostratus in his mind. So far as the Arabs are concerned, Prof. Wellhausen ⁸ seems to

¹ *Finnische Märchen*, übersetzt von Emmy Schreck (Weimar, 1887), No. 6, pp. 44 sqq.

✓ ² Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology*, II p. 405.

³ E. Rolland, *Faune populaire de la France*, III. p. 40 sq.

⁴ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* x. 137, compare *id.* xxix. 72. See below, note on p. 126.

⁵ Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* i. 20.

⁶ *Id.* in 9.

⁷ Miss C. F. Gordon Cumming, *In the Hebrides* (London, 1883), p. 54.

⁸ J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentumes* (Berlin, 1887), p. 147. Bochart (*Hierozoicon*, p. 22, ed. 1682) quotes an Arabic writer to the same effect, but the writer seems to have copied Philostratus.

know no later authority than Philostratus. It is a German and Bohemian superstition that whoever eats serpent's flesh understands the language of animals.¹ The Lithuanians say that whoever boils a white serpent and eats it with the soup becomes omniscient.² The Wends tell of a man who through eating a white serpent understood what the birds said.³ In a Syrian story a dervish has drunk serpent-water; hence serpents cannot bite him, and he talks with both serpents and birds in their respective languages.⁴ In the *Edda* Sigurd kills the dragon Fafnir and roasts his heart on a spit. Putting his finger to it to see if it is roasted enough he burns his finger and sticks it in his mouth. But the moment that Fafnir's heart's blood touches his tongue he understands the language of birds and knows what the eagles on the branches are saying.⁵ The same story occurs in the *Volsung Saga*, except that nuthatches take the place of eagles.⁶ Saxo Grammaticus⁷ tells how Rollo, peeping through a crevice, saw his mother Craca preparing a peculiar dish. Three snakes hung on a rope and the juices flowing from their mouths furnished the sauce. Two of the snakes were black; the third was white. The white one hung a little higher than the other two and was fastened by a knot in its tail, whereas the black ones had a string running through them. When his father Regnar and his stepbrother (Craca's son) Eric came, they all sat down to table. Craca put before Eric and Rollo a single dish containing the flesh of the black and white snakes. The end of the platter containing the black snakes was put next her own son Eric; but Rollo happening to taste the black snake, turned round the dish and ate the black snake, leaving the white for his brother. From eating the black snake, Rollo acquired universal knowledge, including an understanding of the speech of animals both wild

¹ A. Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube*, § 153, Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren*, No. 1658.

² E. Veckenstedt, *Die Mythen, Sagen und Legenden der Zamaxten* (Hieidelberg, 1883), ii. p. 166.

³ W. von Schulenburg, *Wendische Volkssagen und Gebräuche aus dem Spreewald* (Leipzig, 1880), p. 96.

⁴ E. Prym und A. Socin, *Syrische Sagen und Maerchen*, p. 150 sq.

⁵ *Die Edda*, übersetzt von K. Simrock, pp. 180, 309.

⁶ *Volsunga- und Ragnars-Saga*, übersetzt von F. H. von der Hagen² (Stuttgart, 1880), p. 63 sq.

⁷ *Historia Danica*, bk. v. p. 193 sq., ed. P. E. Müller.

and tame, much to the disappointment of his stepmother Craca, who had intended the black snake for her own son Eric. The virtue here attributed by Saxo to a black snake is unique ; in all other cases, where the colour of the serpent is mentioned, it is a *white* snake whose flesh has this magic virtue.¹ In Norway, Sweden, and Jutland down to the nineteenth century the flesh of a *white* snake was supposed to confer supernatural wisdom.² We are almost led to conjecture that Saxo has interchanged the rôles of the black and white serpent ; ³ this conjecture is borne out by the precedence apparently given by Craca to the white serpent in the process of cooking, as described by Saxo.

There are a number of stories in which, as in Saxo, the magic serpent is eaten by a person for whom it was not intended. In a Breton story ⁴ a workman, lodging with an old dame who passed for a witch, one day brought her a snake which he had killed. She cooked it ready for eating, and when she was out of the house, the man ate a bit of it. Going out of the house he was surprised to find that he understood the language of the birds. He told the dame what had happened, she breathed into his mouth, and after that he ceased to understand the bird language. The way in which Michael Scott was supposed to have become a wizard is somewhat similar. Being attacked by a white serpent he killed it by dividing it into three pieces at a blow. The landlady of the house at which he stopped for the night, hearing of this, offered a reward for the middle piece of the white serpent. It was brought to her. In the night the landlady, thinking everyone was asleep, cooked the serpent and from time to time she dipped her finger in the saucepan, upon which the cock crew. But Michael Scott was watching her and out of curiosity he too dipped his finger in the sauce and applied it to the tip of his tongue. Immediately the

¹ Except in X. Marmier's *Contes populaires de différents pays*, 2ème Série, p. 56, where the serpent is blue with a green head. But in Waldau's version (of which Marmier's version appears to be an amplification) there is no mention of the snake's colour (*Bohmasches Märchenbuch*, p. 13).

² P. E. Müller on Saxo Gram-

maticus, vol. ii. p. 146.

³ The only example I know of virtue attributed to a *black* snake is in the *Panchatantra* (ii. p. 359, Benfey), where the steam from a black snake boiling in a pot restores the sight of a blind man.

⁴ P. Sébillot, *Traditions et superstitions de la Haute-Bretagne*, ii. p. 224.

cock crew and Michael Scott's mind "received a new light to which he was formerly a stranger", including a "knowledge of 'good and evil' and all the 'second sights' that can be acquired".¹

In a German story² a wise king eats of a white serpent every day after dinner. His servant, out of curiosity, one day tastes the white serpent and immediately understands the language of animals. In a Bohemian tale³ an old woman brings a serpent to a king, telling him that if he ate it he would understand the language of all animals. He does so, but his servant, who has strict orders not to taste the serpent, disobeys his orders, tastes, and at once his ears are opened and he understands the language of animals. He betrays his knowledge by laughing at a remark made by a horse; but the king promises to spare his life if he will bring him the maiden with the golden hair. In a German legend of the origin of the Seeburger lake near Göttingen it is said that long ago there was a wicked lord whose servant once brought to the castle a silver-white serpent instead of a fish. The lord, who knew a little of the beast language, was pleased, for he was aware that whoever ate of such a serpent would attain to a complete mastery of that language. He ate his fill of the white serpent, and his servant, against orders, tasted the little that was left. Soon the wicked lord heard the birds saying that the castle was doomed to immediate destruction. He asks his servant what the cock is saying; the servant in his alarm betrays his knowledge of the bird language; his master cleaves his skull, and rides away. At sunset the castle sinks into the ground, and where it stood there stretches a broad water.⁴ In another German story a girl who had eaten of a serpent foretells, from hearing what a cock says, that an ale-house will sink into the ground that very day and be replaced by a deep water.⁵

✓ ¹ W. Grant Stewart, *The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland* (new ed., London, 1851), pp. 53, 56.

² Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, No. 17.

³ A. Waldau, *Bohmische Märchenbuch*, p. 13 sqq.; X. Marmier,

Contes populaires de différents pays, 2ème Série, p. 55 sqq.

⁴ Grimm, *Deutsche Sagen*,⁸ No. 132.

⁵ A. Kuhn und W. Schwartz, *Nord-deutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche*, p. 154. Compare the German story above, p. 108.

In the Tyrol there are stories¹ of a Doctor Theophrastus, a marvellous physician and a master of the black art, who with great difficulty caught a *Haselwurm*, i.e. a white serpent, the taste of which imparts a knowledge of the language of all creatures and so sharpens the eyes that they can see through rocks into the veins of gold and gems deep down in the earth. When at last Dr. Theophrastus has caught the white snake, he orders his servant to boil it and to be sure not to taste it. The servant tastes it and betrays his knowledge (as in the case of the husband and wife) by laughing at the talk of two magpies, whereupon his master kills him.² There is a very similar story in Bohemia.³ In a Bavarian story the servant who is charged with cooking the wonder-working serpent changes it, eats it himself, and gives his master something else; the servant understands the language of animals and plants, and is killed by his master.⁴ In an Austrian story the servant who has tasted of the white serpent betrays himself by his knowledge of the goose language, but the story has not the usual tragic end.⁵ In a Highland story a drover goes to England to sell cattle with a hazel staff in his hand. He meets a doctor who asks him to go and bring him a wand from the same hazel tree from which the drover got his staff.

¹ J. N. Von Alpenburg, *Mythen und Sagen Tirols*, p. 302 sqq. Doctor Theophrastus is probably Paracelsus, whose real name was Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim. A Swabian legend tells how *Theophrastus Paracelsus* got fern seed (E. Meier, *Deutsche Sagen, Sitten und Gebräuche aus Schwaben*, p. 244).

² In another version (von Alpenburg, *loc. cit.*) the servant betrays himself by his supernatural sight, in another by his knowledge of the language of plants. In this last version the doctor and his servant come to a meadow, and as soon as the flowers and plants see the doctor they all begin to shout out the medical properties which they respectively possess. The servant laughs at a remark of a little red flower and is killed, as before. On this plant language, acquired by tasting of the *Haselwurm*, compare Alpenburg, *op. cit.* p. 378. In a Swahili tale a man

becomes a great physician by drinking the second skimming of the cooked body of the King of the Snakes. The nature of the knowledge which he thus acquired may be inferred from the medical knowledge possessed by the King of Snakes in his lifetime; on a certain island when the trees saw the Snake-king they each declared what they were good for; one said: "I am medicine for the head," another "I am medicine for the feet," etc. (E. Steere, *Swahili Tales*, pp. 345, 361). Thus the Swahili doctor has an exact parallel in Dr. Theophrastus, so far as a knowledge of simples goes.

³ J. V. Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren*, § 1658

⁴ Sepp, *Altbayerischer Sagenschatz* (Munich, 1876), p. 615 sq.

⁵ A. Peter, *Volkssthumliches aus Oesterreichisch-Schlesien*, ii. p. 33 sq.

Also he was to watch at the foot of the hazel tree till seven serpents came out ; he was to let the six pass but the seventh he was to put in a bottle and bring to the doctor. The drover went and cut some boughs from the hazel tree. Then he watched at the hole ; six brown and barred serpents came out ; he let them pass ; last came a white snake, which he bottled up and carried to the doctor. The two make a fire with the hazel sticks and put the snake in a pot to boil. The drover is ordered not to let the steam escape, so he wraps paper round the pot lid. But steam begins to come out at one place, so the drover, thinking to push the paper down, puts his finger to the place, and then his finger to his mouth, for it was wet with the bree ; and " lo ! he knew everything, and the eyes of his mind were opened ". Presently the doctor came back, lifted the lid, put his finger in the steam and sucked it. But the virtue had gone out of it, and he saw that the drover had tasted it. " Since you have taken the bree of it, take the flesh too," said he in a rage, and flung the pot at him. So the drover was allwise and became a great doctor.¹

The idea that the magic serpent, whose flesh imparts a knowledge of the language of animals and plants, is to be found under a hazel tree occurs also in Germany,² where indeed, as we have seen, the serpent is often called the

¹ J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, II. p. 361 sqq. In Chambers' *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, p. 77 sqq., a similar story (but without the hazel) is told of Sir James Ramsay of Bamff, how by sucking his fingers, which he had burned in cooking a white serpent for his master, he found that his eyes were opened and he could see through everything ; so he became a great doctor because " he could clearly see what was wrang in folk's insides ". Again Gilleadha became a famous doctor in much the same way (Campbell, *op. cit.* II. p. 366). Again some giants bade Fingal roast a fish for them, threatening to kill him if he burned it. Seeing that one small spot was burning he put his finger on it and then put his burned finger in his

mouth ; a gift of omniscience was the result (*ib.* p. 362 sq.). From such cases of wisdom acquired by sucking the fingers, Liebrecht (*Gervasius von Teubury*, p. 156) ingeniously proposed to explain the Egyptian Harpocrates, who was represented sitting on a lotus flower with his finger in his mouth. Compare Callaway, *Religious System of the Amazulu*, pp. 290 note, 381.

² Sepp, *Altbayerischer Sagenschatz*, p. 615 ; compare Kuhn, *Herabkunft des Feuers*,² p. 201 sq. In the Tyrol, on the contrary, it is said that snakes do not lurk under hazel bushes (Zingerle, *Sitten, Brauche und Meinungen des Tiroler Volkes*,² No. 886). In Sweden it is thought that snakes lose their poison by contact with a hazel (Kuhn, *op. cit.* p. 202).

"hazel-worm" (*Haselwurm*). The coincidence is not merely a verbal one, for in Gaelic (from which the Highland story is translated) the hazel is *caltumn*. With regard to the white serpent, Miss Gordon Cumming says that "it is believed by some of the old Highlanders still to exist in the land—a faith which is occasionally confirmed by the appearance of a silvery grey specimen".¹

Occasionally the animal language is acquired by a combination of serpent and plant, as indeed is, to some extent, the case when the serpent is to be found under the hazel. A Bohemian receipt for learning the language of geese is to cut off a serpent's head, split it, and put a pea in the split, then bury the head in the garden; eat the first pod of the pea-plant which grows from the pea in the serpent's head, and you will understand the language of geese.² In a poem of the Lebed-Tartars a young man receives from a serpent's mouth a bit of a plant, which he puts in his mouth, and immediately understands the language of serpents, and he and the serpent talk to each other.³

The last mode of learning the animal language which we shall notice is peculiar, though the plot of the story is closely similar to the "husband and wife" story which we have traced across the old world. The story is a Tartar one, from the village of Săit.⁴ An old beggar who takes no thought for the morrow throws daily into the sea the remains of his food, and upon the bread thus cast on the waters the fish grow fat. The thing comes to the ears of the lord of the fishes, who sends for the free-handed beggar to reward him. As the fish are conducting him through the sea to their lord, they say to him, "The king of fishes will offer you gold and silver; do not take them, but say 'Let me kiss your tongue.'" The fish-king did as the fish had foretold. The beggar refuses the proffered wealth and asks only to kiss the king's tongue. The king, after expostulating, allows the beggar to do so, but warns him that by this means he will receive a knowledge of the language of all creatures, which he must reveal to no

¹ C. F. Gordon Cumming, *In the Hebrides*, p. 54.

² J. V. Grohmann, *Aberglauben und Gebräuche aus Böhmen und Mähren*; § 1414.

³ W. Radloff, *Proben der Volkslitteratur der nördlichen turkschen Stämme Sud-Sibiriens*, i. p. 322.

⁴ W. Radloff, *op. cit.* iv. p. 492 sqq.

one under pain of death. By overhearing the talk of two birds, the beggar discovers a treasure which makes him a rich man. His sudden wealth excites the suspicions of his wife, who threatens to inform the police. The old man is in a strait. His friend, the king of the fish, discerns his embarrassment and sends two birds to give him a hint. The beggar hears the cock saying to the hen: "Eat your meat and put on your clothes, and never mind where the food and clothes come from; that's my business, not yours." The lesson is not lost on the beggar; he takes a whip and soon brings his wife to a better frame of mind.

In reviewing the chief means of attaining the animal language, namely, rings, fern seed, and serpents, we may notice some points of contact between them. First, as to *rings*. We have seen (p. 112, note 5) that serpents confer wishing-rings upon their benefactors just as they confer the gift of tongues. Now it is a common idea that serpents have precious stones in their heads,¹ and in the Annamite story we have seen that the gift of the animal language is a special property of these stones. We may conjecture, therefore, first, that rings bestowed by serpents contain these serpent-gems; and second, that rings which confer the gift of animal speech are serpent-rings, that is, contain serpent-gems. This conjecture is confirmed by a second parallelism which holds between magic rings and serpent-heads (or the gems in the serpents' heads); both alike are capable of rendering their possessor invisible. This was the property of the magic ring of Gyges,² and it was equally a property of the gems found in the heads of the serpents near Paraka by the Indians, who also acquired the speech of animals by eating the heart and liver of these same serpents,³ and it is still supposed to be a property of serpents' heads in Bohemia.⁴ It is said to be a common opinion in Wales, Scotland, and Cornwall that about Midsummer Eve the snakes meet in companies and by joining heads and hissing produce a glass ring, which whoever finds shall prosper in all his undertakings; and these rings are

¹ See Th. Benfey, *Panischatantra*, i. p. 214, note.

² See Stallbaum on Plato, *Republic*, 359 D. It is a curious coincidence that both in Plato and in Chaucer the

magic ring is associated with a horse of brass.

³ Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* iii. 8.

⁴ A. Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksglaube*,² § 153.

called snake-stones.¹ If this idea could be proved to be widespread, we might perhaps suppose that this ring is the wishing-ring bestowed by serpents on their benefactors; but in the absence of such proof it is better to suppose that these wishing-rings contain the gems from the serpents' heads.² However, the time when these glass rings are formed (namely, Midsummer Eve) is remarkable, because, as we have seen, this is precisely the time when the animal language is supposed to be acquired through fern seed.

The connexion of the *fern* with serpents in folk-lore is undoubted. In Germany the fern is sometimes called the adder-plant (*Otterkraut*), and anyone who carries it is thought to be pursued by adders till he throws it away.³ The Lithuanians also call the fern the serpent-plant, because the king of the serpents is supposed to fetch the bloom of the fern on Midsummer Eve to be his crown.⁴ In a Lithuanian legend a queen finds by night the serpents fighting with the other animals for the fern; she plucks the fern, wounds herself in the thigh with her sword, puts the fern into the wound, the wound closes on it, and immediately the queen becomes omniscient.⁵ This probably took place on Midsummer Eve, the time when the fern possesses its magic properties. Similarly in Russia the person who catches the golden bloom of the fern on Midsummer Eve should cut his hand with his knife and insert the fern into the wound; then all secret things become visible to him.⁶ Again, the same parallelism which exists between rings and serpents exists between fern seed and serpents; for fern seed, as we have seen (p. 109), like serpents' heads, renders the wearer invisible.

¹ J. Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, 1. p. 322 (Bohn's edition).

² We might unite the two hypotheses by supposing that the glass ring formed by the serpents on Midsummer Eve is composed by the fusion of the gems in their heads. But this would be going too far from the facts.

³ J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, p. 1013; in Bohemia snakes are thought to lurk under ferns (Kuhn, *Herabkunft des Feuers*,³ p. 196, note).

⁴ E. Veckenstedt, *Die Mythen*,

Sagen und Legenden der Zamasten (Lstauer), ii. p. 180.

⁵ *Id.* i. p. 116 sq.

⁶ W. R. S. Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 98 sq. For rubbing the magic substance into a wound, compare Callaway, *Religious System of the Amasulu*, pp. 313, 380; E. Holub, *Sieben Jahre in Süd-Afrika*, vol. ii. p. 361; Rochefort, *Hist. nat. et mor. des Iles Antilles*, p. 556; Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles*, vol. ii. p. 377.

The reason why the serpent is especially supposed to impart a knowledge of the language of birds appears from a folk-lore conception of the origin of serpents. According to Democritus as reported by Pliny,¹ serpents are generated from the mixed blood of diverse birds. This explains why serpents should understand the language of birds; they do so because they are blood relations of birds, having the blood of birds in their veins. If we ask why serpents are thought to be formed of the blood of birds, we may conjecture that the idea originated in the observation that serpents eat birds and birds' eggs. Hence on the folk-lore principle that in eating of an animal's flesh one absorbs the animal's mental qualities, (1) the serpent acquires the bird language, (2) anyone who eats a serpent also acquires the language of birds. From the language of birds to the language of animals in general is not perhaps a long step in folk-lore. The idea that birds are pre-eminently talkers appears in the practice, observed by some Turkish tribes in Asia, of giving to children

Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* x 137. The reader may well be startled at finding folk-lore biology attributed to Democritus, one of the most enlightened men of antiquity, who in his conception of physical causation stands nearer the most modern physicists than any other of the ancients. Some of the ancients themselves were staggered by the portentous absurdities fathered on the philosopher, and justly suspected that some of the works which passed for his were spurious. See Aulus Gellius, x. 12; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxx. 10. Grounds, I believe, could be shown for holding that some of the worst of these absurdities are taken from the works of Bolus the Mendesian, a nominal adherent of the school of Democritus, especially from his work, *On Sympathies and Antipathies*. It is directly stated by Columella (vii. 5. 17) that a work of this writer was falsely attributed to Democritus. The *Sympathies and Antipathies* of Bolus are probably the source of the nonsense put down to Democritus in the *Geoponica*; and as one of the charms there ascribed to the philosopher (xiv. 5) consists in the

use of the name *Adam*, we may suspect that Bolus the Mendesian was acquainted with the Jewish writings, to which as an Egyptian he might easily have access. He would thus belong to the Alexandrian age. Obviously the idea that, serpents being formed from the blood of birds, anyone who eats a serpent will understand the bird language would be perfectly in place in a folk-lore work on "sympathy and antipathy". The passage in Columella would seem to show that Suidas is wrong in distinguishing between Bolus the Democritean and Bolus the Mendesian; for a work of Bolus the Mendesian could hardly have been ascribed to Democritus if the writer had not belonged to Democritus' school. Unless, indeed, we suppose that Bolus the Mendesian was confounded with Bolus the Democritean and the latter with Democritus. This is perhaps the preferable hypothesis; for Bolus the Mendesian was (according to Suidas) a Pythagorean philosopher, and the Pythagorean school gave more scope for folk-lore than the Democritean.

who are long of learning to speak the tongues of certain birds to eat.¹

It is much less easy to say why fern seed is supposed to impart a knowledge of the language of animals. In a Thuringen story a hunter procures fern seed by shooting at the sun at noon on Midsummer Day; three drops of blood fall down, which he catches on a white cloth, and these drops of blood are the fern seed.² If we could suppose that the blood thus falling from the sky was the blood of birds, all would be plain. But still this would not explain the special association of fern seed with Midsummer Day. From this association, coupled with the fact that the hunter shoots at the *sun* at noon on this day of all days in the year, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that fern seed has a solar connexion. It would seem to be the blood of the sun rather than of birds.³ But if this is so, why should it convey a knowledge of the language of animals?

¹ H. Vámbéry, *Das Turkenvolk*, p 218

² L. Bechstein, *Thüringer Sagenbuch*² (Leipzig, 1885), No 161; *Id.*, *Deutsches Sagenbuch*, No 500 For drawing blood by shooting at the sun, compare K Mullenhoff, *Sagen, Märchen*

und Lieder der Herzogthümer Schleswig-Holstein und Lauenburg, No 492.

³ Kuhn supposed that the fern is an embodiment of the lightning (*Herabkunft des Feuers*,² p 194 *sqq.*). But this would leave its connexion with Midsummer Day as mysterious as ever.

hearth within the circle of the huts ; her duty is limited to maintaining a perpetual fire on her own hearth, from which a brand may be taken at any time to maintain or rekindle the sacred fire on what we may call the common hearth, though only the elders and men of a certain rank have the right of access to it.¹ The reverence for the sacred fire appears to be real and deep : the prosperity of the community is believed to depend on it ; and when things go ill with the people and the supply of food runs low, the sacred fire is allowed to die out and is solemnly relit by the friction of two sticks worked by the chief and his principal assistant.² As usual, the two fire-sticks employed for this purpose are regarded as male and female : the flat stick, which is laid on the ground, is called the female ; and the upright stick, which is twirled between the hands of the operator with the point resting on the flat stick, is called the male.³ Yet the operation of fire-making, at least on these solemn occasions, is performed by two men alone, not by a man and a woman.

THE LANGUAGE OF ANIMALS

P. 101. In a Russian version, which reproduces very closely the former version of the *Seven Wise Masters*.—A full English translation of this Russian version, of which I have only given a summary in the text, has now been published by Mr. C. Fillingham Coxwell in his copious and valuable selection of Siberian and other folk-tales.⁴

P. 110. But most commonly it is a serpent which conveys a knowledge of the language of animals.—Among the Roumanians of Transylvania there is a popular belief that, if a man will lie on his belly beside a pool or on the bank of a river on St. George's Day (April 23), he will see in the water a white snake, by means of which he can acquire the gift of conversing with every living thing that God has

¹ H. Vedder, *Die Berg-Dama*, i 25, 32, 33, 34-36.

² H. Vedder, *op. cit* i 25-28

³ H. Vedder, *op. cit* i. 21 *sq.* As to the sacred fire of the Berg-Damas, compare E. Brauer, *Zuge aus der Religion der Herero* (Leipzig, 1925), pp. 95 *sqq.* His account is based on

that of Vedder.

⁴ C. Fillingham Coxwell, *Siberian and Other Folk-tales, Primitive Literature of the Empire of the Tsars*, collected and translated, with an Introduction and Notes (London : the C. W. Daniel Company, N.D.), pp. 726 *sq.* The original is Afanasief, No. 138

created. All that he has to do is to catch the snake, knock off its head with a silver coin, cover the head up with earth, and plant garlic in the earth. Then, if before next St. George's Day he eats of the garlic which has thus been fertilized by the serpent's head, he will be able not merely to talk with every living creature but even to hear the grass growing.¹ In the *Gesta Romanorum* we read how a knight learned to understand the speech of all animals by swallowing a certain root which a serpent had put into his mouth.² In a Greek story the hero learns the language of all animals in the belly of a dragon which, as a particular favour, had swallowed him on purpose to endow him with this precious accomplishment.³ In Chinese and Malay stories, derived from India, it is the Serpent-King who imparts a knowledge of the language of animals,⁴ and the same is true of an Armenian version of the tale;⁵ but in a Turkish version of the same story it is a simple snake who bestows the wondrous gift.⁶ In a South African version of the story a mythical serpent teaches a lad the language of animals by writing on the boy's tongue.⁷ But in a Magyar version of the story it is the daughter of the Serpent-King who, out of gratitude, imparts a knowledge of the language of animals to the shepherd who has saved her life.⁸ A Walloon story relates how a young man brought back the son whom the Father Serpent had lost, and how to reward his benefactor the Father Serpent breathed and spat into his mouth, after which the young man understood the language of birds.⁹ In a French story a man acquires the language of animals accidentally by eating a piece of a snake which a fairy or a witch had cooked, but he loses the knowledge when the fairy has breathed into his mouth.¹⁰

P. 113. This tale may be traced, with variations of detail, right across the old world from Italy and Finland on the one side

¹ W. Schmidt, *Das Jahr und seine Tage in Meinung und Brauch der Romanen Siebenburgens* (Hermannstadt, 1866), p. 10

² See below, pp. 466 sq.

³ J. G. von Hahn, *Griechische und Albanesische Märchen* (Leipzig, 1864), vol. 1. p. 236

⁴ Below, pp. 441 sq., 443

⁵ Below, p. 453

⁶ Below, p. 449

⁷ Below, pp. 464 sq.

⁸ Below, p. 469.

⁹ P. Sebillot, *Le Folk-lore de France*, III. (Paris, 1906), p. 293.

¹⁰ P. Sebillot, *Le Folk-lore de France*, III. 293 sq.

to Annam on the other.—The wide diffusion of this particular story of the *Language of Animals* in Asia, Europe and Africa was long ago pointed out by Theodor Benfey,¹ and in more recent years it has been much more fully, almost exhaustively, demonstrated by a Finnish scholar, Antti Aarne, in a learned dissertation.² It may be well to supply some of the gaps in my former treatment of the subject by drawing on the stores amassed by these writers, eked out in places by my own reading.

In the first place, then, the oldest known versions of the story are found in the literature of ancient India, which of itself may be thought to point to India as the original home of the story, whence it may have spread, through oral transmission or literary influence, to all the remote corners of the world, where it has been recorded. Of these old Indian versions there are at least five.

1. Thus, in a Jain-Prakrit version of the *Munipaticaritam*, it is said that King Brahmadatta of Kampilya was once carried away by his horse into a forest, but his servants, following up his horse's tracks, found him there and brought him back. At home the Queen asked him what he had seen in the wood. He told her how he had seen a woman in the form of a Nâgini (a mythical snake) holding dalliance with a Gonasa snake. Indignant at the lewd behaviour of the pair he lashed them with his whip, whereupon they disappeared. After thus unbosoming himself the King stepped out of his palace, and whom should he light on there but a God. The deity informed him that he was the husband of the lady whom the King had seen misbehaving in the wood; that his wife had told him that the King had tried to seduce her and that she had spurned his advances; wherefore the God had come to kill the royal seducer, but having learned the truth from the King's talk with his wife, which he (the deity) had overheard, he was perfectly satisfied of the King's irreproachable conduct and was ready to reward it by

¹ Theodor Benfey, "Ein Märchen von der Thiersprache, Quelle und Verbreitung", *Orient und Occident*, ii. (Göttingen, 1864), pp 133-171

² Antti Aarne, *Der Thiersprachenkundige Mann und seine neugierige*

Frau, Hamina, 1914 (FF Communications, No. 15). This valuable work is now, I believe, out of print. For a copy of it I am indebted to the kindness of Professor Kaarle Krohn of Helsingfors.

granting the King a wish. Thereupon the King expressed a desire to understand the language of all living things. The God granted his wish, but on condition that, if he ever revealed the secret to anybody, he should die on the spot with a cloven skull.

Now one day, when the King was at his toilet, he heard the tame hen-cuckoo say to the cock-cuckoo, "Bring me the King's pomade." The cock refused to do so from fear of the King, whereat the hen said that, if he did not do as she bade him, as sure as death she would die. At that the King burst into a loud guffaw. His wife desired to know the cause of his laughter. He declared that he could not tell her, for if he did so he would die on the spot. But she persisted, saying that die she would if he did not tell her. So he promised to reveal to her the fatal secret so soon as he had mounted the funeral pyre. So the two repaired together to the burial-ground, and the news of the thing got wind among the folk.

A she-goat begged of the he-goat, her mate, that he would give her a bunch of barley from a heap that lay to hand, but he refused because the barley was meant for the King's horse—anybody else who should take of it would be put to death. The she-goat protested that if he did not do as she wished she would die. The he-goat answered, "Die then! I'll find other mates." The she-goat cast in his teeth the example of the mighty King who, for his wife's sake, was ready even to die. "But as for you," she went on, "you're a brute!" The he-goat was not to be moved; he answered, "It is true that I am only a brute by birth, but if the King has made up his mind to die for his wife's sake he must be a brute by nature." The King, who was passing by at the moment, heard all that was said. He gave the he-goat a golden crown and told the Queen that, if she was weary of her life, she might die and be done with it, but as for himself he would find other wives just as good as her.¹

2. A somewhat abridged version of the story occurs in the *Harivamśa*, a supplement of the great Indian epic, the

¹ Theodor Benfey, *Kleinere Schriften*, ausgewählt und herausgegeben von Adalbert Bezzenberger, ii. (Berlin,

1892), Dritte Abtheilung, pp. 234-236.

Mahabharata, to which it has been added as a nineteenth book. The *Mahabharata* appears to have existed in its complete form about A.D. 400¹ In the *Harivamṣa* the tale runs as follows .

King Brahmadata knew the language of all animals. Once he walked with his wife Sannati, daughter of Devala, in the wood. There he heard a male ant lovingly beseeching his mate, the female ant, who was angry with him. At that Brahmadata suddenly burst into a loud laugh. His poor wife was filled with shame, and for many days she refrained from all food. When her husband spoke to her gently, she said, "Thou didst laugh at me, O King, wherefore I can no longer live." He told her what he had laughed at, but she did not believe him, and she said to him angrily, "No man ever possesses such a gift. For what man can understand the ants save by the favour of a God or as the meed of merit in a former life? But if thou dost really possess this knowledge of all languages, impart it to me that I also may know them. Else will I resign my life, I swear it to thee." When the King heard this cruel saying of the Queen, he was very sorrowful and prayed for help to the Supreme God, the Lord of all beings, Narayana; six nights long he prayed and fasted. Then the King saw visibly the God Narayana, the Lord. And the All-merciful spake to him, "O Brahmadata, to-morrow morning shalt thou see great salvation." Thus favoured by the deity, the King, after washing his head, drove joyfully to the city, seated in his golden chariot. Next morning Brahmadata with his wife walked to the same wood. Then, full of joy at the religious meditation (*yoga*), his wife Sannati, the wise daughter of Devala, said to the King, as he went to the wood, "Well aware was I, great King, that thou knowest the speech of the ants, but I wished to exhort thee by the semblance of anger, which now is vanished into air. Henceforth we will walk the highest, the happy way; for I have wakened in thee the memory of that religious meditation of which the thought had grown dim in thy mind." The King was exceedingly glad to hear the words of his wife; he discovered the life of religious

¹ A. A. Macdonell, *India's Past History of Sanskrit Literature* (London, 1900), p. 287. (Oxford, 1927), p. 88; compare *id.*,

meditation and attained to the way that is hard of attainment.¹

In this version the merry old tale has been converted, for the sake of religious edification, into a sort of pious tract. The hard-hearted wife, who prizes the satisfaction of her own idle curiosity above the life of her husband, has been transformed into a devout dame, who only feigns curiosity in order to recall her backsliding spouse to that higher life of religious meditation which he had for a time forsaken. Henceforth the two will walk hand in hand as pilgrims seeking a celestial city by the practice of those religious austerities on which so many people in India and elsewhere have pinned their hope of eternal happiness.²

3. The story meets us again in the other great Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, and here the shrewish wife reappears in all her shrewishness to receive her just reward in what we may call the Indian version of the Taming of the Shrew. In the epic the stepmother of Rama, the hero, forces her husband to drive her stepson into banishment, thus drawing down on herself the ill will of the whole kingdom. Sumitra, the charioteer, gives tongue to the popular feeling and loads the Queen with the bitterest reproaches (Book II, chapter 35). Amongst other things he casts up to her a painful episode in the life of her mother :

'I believe it runs in your blood; you are just what your mother was before you.

*For, as the proverb has it, honey flows not from a nimba tree*³

¹ Theodor Benfey, "Ein Märchen von der Thiersprache, Quelle und Verbreitung", *Orient und Occident*, II. (Göttingen, 1864), pp. 135, 140, 147-150.

² As to the practice of *yoga*, or pious seclusion and meditation, in Indian religions, see A. A. Macdonell, *India's Past*, p. 153: "The primary meaning is the 'yoking' of the mind with a view to concentrate thought on a single point; for these exercises aim at the regulation of breathing, sitting, and restraining the senses for the purpose of exclusive concentration on a single supernatural object, in order to obtain as a result supernatural knowledge and

supernatural powers. Such practices are prehistoric, going back to a time when there was no essential difference between a saint and a magician. That they were pre-Buddhistic in India appears from the great part these exercises play in ancient Buddhism. As restraint of the senses forms part of them, they evidently include morality. In this aspect, Yoga could be combined with any philosophical system. In one form or another Yoga is to be found among all Indian ascetics, including Buddhists and Jains."

³ The *nimba* tree is the *Melia azadiracta*. Trees of this sort have bitter astringent qualities; their exudations

*A Gracious One gave your father a splendid gift,
Whereby he bridled your mother's stubbornness.
Thereby the King understood the speech of every creature,
And so every word of crawling things was known to him.
Then your father, lying in bed, understood by its whimpering
The love-making of an insect, and long he laughed at it
Your mother at that was wroth and spoke of hanging herself.
But the King answered her, 'If I tell you the cause of my laughter,
I must die the same moment, there is no help for it'
'Live or die!' says she, 'it is all one to me. Tell me, and mock me not'
Thus adjured by his wife the monarch
Related the whole business, word for word, to the Gracious One.
The brave Gracious One gave the King this answer.
'Let her die and be hanged to her, O King On no account do what she
wants'
When the King heard this speech he was brimful of glee; he drove
Your mother out of the house with all speed and lived as happy as a God."¹*

4. The same story occurs, with variations, in a Tamul translation of the *Vetāla-pañcaviṃśatikā*, or 'Twenty-five (tales) of the Vetāla', a collection of Indian stories associated with a Vetāla, or ghost that infests cemeteries. Magic plays an important part in these tales, and like the *Panchatantra* the collection has furnished many stories to the literature of the world.² The Tamul version is known as the *Vedala Cadai*. In it the *Language of Animals* is the ninth story, and runs as follows:

"In a city called Ubastipuram, there was a king named Grahabujan, and he had a daughter whose name was Saundari. Whilst he was thinking of forming a suitable match for her with someone of high scientific attainment, a Raja presented himself, of profound knowledge, wisdom, and prudence, to whom, after a due investigation of his merits, he gave his daughter in marriage.

"After the celebration of the nuptials, the young man took his bride, and returned to his own city. On their arrival, whilst the husband and wife were reposing together on a raised bedstead, some little ants were proceeding to pass in a line under the bed, upon which those that walked

are used for lamp oil (Th. Benfey's note, referring to Roxburgh, *Flora Indica*, ii. 394, J. Lindley, *Vegetable Kingdom*, Ed. 2, London, 1847, p. 394.)

¹ Theodor Benfey, "Ein Märchen

von der Thiersprache, Quelle und Verbreitung", *Orient und Occident*, ii. (Göttingen, 1864), pp 151 sq

² A. A. Macdonell, *History of Sanskrit Literature* (London, 1900), p. 375; id., *India's Past*, p. 127.

first suddenly halted. The ants that were coming up in the rear demanded on what account they were stopped ; to which they replied that there was no room to pass under the bed. The ants that stood behind rejoined, ' Can you not take up the bedstead, and throw it on one side ? ' to which the others answered, ' It would be a heinous sin to do so whilst a husband and wife are sleeping together upon it.'

" The Raja, hearing the conversation which the ants held, was struck with the oddity of their remarks, and began to laugh. The wife seeing this, asked him what was the cause of his mirth. The ants, on hearing the sounds of their voices, cried out in their language to the Raja, ' If you tell anyone what we have been saying, may your head be split asunder ' The Raja being thus threatened with a curse became afflicted with grief, while his spouse demanded why he did not open his mouth in reply to what she had asked. ' Since I find no favour in your sight,' said she, ' I will put a period to my existence by a violent death ' On hearing these words, the Raja commanded that a pile of wood should be raised in the burning-ground, and stretching himself upon it, was on the point of calling his wife to share his fate, when it chanced that a ewe and a ram came that way, and as they were standing together the ram went to pay his addresses to the ewe, when the ewe turning to the ram said, ' I will not receive your attentions, unless you will gather for me some grass which is hanging in this well.' The ram, on hearing this, was much afflicted, and thus replied, ' If in stretching out to gather that grass I should fall and be killed, whom will you then have to bear you company ? If you do not choose to associate with me, it is of no great consequence, you may go about your business.' The Raja, having witnessed this scene, instantly rose up, and returning to the city, made another marriage, and lived happily " ¹

5. The same story occurs in a Marathi version of the *Panchatantra*, where it runs as follows :

In the city of Kimkalapura, in the Deccan, reigned King

¹ *The Vedala Cakar*, translated by B. G. Babington, M.D., F.R.S., in *Miscellaneous Translations from Oriental Languages*, vol. 1. (London, 1831), pp. 55-57. Compare Th. Ben-

fey, " Ein Marchen von der Thiersprache, Quelle und Verbreitung", *Orient und Occident*, ii. (Göttingen, 1864), pp. 154 sq.

Mayoradhvaja, who was over head and ears in love with his wife Prabhavati. One day, night overtook him in a wild wood, and he passed it under a sandal-wood tree. Under the tree he met an aged hermit, who reproved the King's passion for hunting and taught him the language of all animals, warning him at the same time that he would lose the knowledge and must go to hell if ever he came hunting again, and that he must infallibly die if ever he revealed his secret to anybody.

Now the King was once sitting with his wife at table and saw a female ant, big with young, dragging laboriously a single grain of rice. On her path she met a male ant, who took the grain of rice from her. For that the female upbraided him in very bitter terms, referring pointedly to her own delicate situation and reminding him that it is the husband's duty to provide for his wife. At that the King laughed. The Queen, thinking that he laughed at the meal which she had dressed for him, insisted on learning the reason of his laughter, and threatened to starve herself to death if he did not comply with her wish. At last he consented to do so, but first he went with his suite on a pilgrimage to holy places. While he rested under a tree he heard a she-goat asking a he-goat to carry her across a river, since she was with young and had a longing to browse on the grass that grew on the other bank. The he-goat answered that he was not a doting fool like the King to die for the sake of a woman, adding that if the King had only given his wife a good hiding he would not be in the plight in which he found himself that day. The King took the lesson to heart, returned to his palace, and when the Queen again pestered him with questions he did unto her what he had omitted to do before, and with the happiest results.¹

In modern India the story of the *Language of Animals* with which we are here concerned has been recorded among the Santals, an aboriginal people of the Munda stock inhabiting the eastern outskirts of the Chota Nagpur tableland in the Province of Bengal. The Santals are great story-tellers.

¹ J. Hertel, *Das Pañcatantra, seine Geschichte und seine Verbreitung* (Leipzig und Berlin, 1914), pp. 284 sq.

In the Marathi version the story is numbered iv. 10.

Their stories and legends have been collected and published by the Rev. O. Bodding, D.D., of the Scandinavian Mission to the Santals, and many of them have been translated by Mr. C. H. Bompas of the Indian Civil Service. The following is the Santal version of the story we are discussing :

Once upon a time a brownie (*bonga*) haunted the house of a certain man and gave so much trouble that the man had him exorcized and safely pegged down to the ground, and they fenced in with thorns the place where the brownie lay, and they put a big stone on the top of him. Just at the spot was a clump of the bushes called Kite's claws, and one day, when the berries on the bushes were ripe, a certain cowherd named Ramai went to pick the berries. When he came round to the stone which covered the brownie he stood on it to pick the fruit, and the brownie called to him to get off the stone. Ramai looked about and seeing nobody said, "Who is that speaking?" The brownie answered, "I am buried under the stone; if you will take it off me I will give you whatever boon you ask." The man said he was afraid the brownie would eat him up, but the brownie swore to do him no harm. So Ramai lifted up the stone, and the brownie came out, thanked him, and told him to ask a boon.

The man asked for the power to see brownies and to understand the language of ants. "I will give you the power," said the brownie, "but you must tell no one about it, not even your wife; if you do you will lose the power, and in that case you must not blame me." Then the brownie blew into his ear, and he heard the speech of ants; and the brownie scratched the film of his eyeballs with a thorn, and he saw the brownies; and there were crowds of them living in the village like men. In December, when we thresh the rice, the brownies carry off half of it; but Ramai could see them and would drive them away, and so was able to save his rice.

But he soon lost his useful power. One day, as he was eating his dinner, he dropped some grains of rice, and two ants fell to quarrelling over one grain, and Ramai heard them railing at each other, and he was so tickled that he laughed out loud.

His wife asked him why he laughed, and he said that he

laughed at nothing in particular. But she insisted on knowing, so he said that it was at some scandal he had heard in the village. Still she would not believe him, and worried him till he told her that he had laughed at the quarrel of the ants. Then she made him tell her how he had gained the power to understand what they said. But from that hour he lost the powers which the brownie had bestowed on him.¹

Outside of India the same story of the *Language of Animals* meets us in many other parts of Asia, though we may surmise that in all such cases the story has been borrowed directly or indirectly from an Indian original. In the text I have cited Siamese, Annamite, and Tartar versions, in addition to the better-known version in the *Arabian Nights*.² A Chinese version of it, translated from the *Tripitaka*, was made by a Buddhist monk and missionary, Seng-houei, at Nanking about the middle of the third century A.D. It runs as follows :

In time gone by the daughter of a Serpent-king (Nâgarâja), having gone out for a walk, was clapped into bonds and beaten by a cowherd. The King of the country, going forth to visit his lands, perceived the damsel, delivered her, and let her go. The Serpent-king asked his daughter, "Why have you been weeping?" His daughter answered him, "The King of the country beat me wrongfully." The Serpent-king said, "The King is generally good and gentle; how could he beat people unreasonably?" When it grew dark the Serpent-king turned himself into a serpent, and hidden under the bed he heard what the King was saying to his wife. He said, "On my walk I saw a little girl beaten by a cowherd; I delivered her and let her go."

Next day the Serpent-king in human form presented himself to the King and said to him, "You have rendered me a great service. Yesterday I allowed my daughter to take a walk; she was beaten by a man, but luckily for her you, O King, came and delivered her. I am a Serpent-king; whatever you may wish, you shall have." The King said,

√¹ Cecil Henry Bompas, *Folklore of the Santal Parganas* (London, 1909), No. clvii, "Ramai and the Bonga", pp. 393-395.

² Above, pp. 113-115, 116. The

Tartar version is now accessible in an English translation. See C Fillingham Coxwell, *Siberian and other Folk tales* (London, N.D.), pp. 319-321.

"Of precious things I have plenty. I desire to understand the language of all animals." The Serpent-king said to him, "You must purify yourself for seven days, when these seven days are over, come and speak to me. But take great care that nobody knows of it."¹

This being so, the King was eating with his wife when he saw a pair of butterflies, of which the female told the male to get her some food; the male answered that everybody should get food for himself, to which the female replied that being with young she could not. The King burst out laughing. His wife asked him, "O King, why do you laugh?" The King kept silence. Another time, sitting with his wife, the King saw a pair of butterflies who met on the wall, quarrelled, and fell fighting to the ground. Again the King burst out laughing. His wife said to him, "Why do you laugh?" So it happened thrice, the King always making answer, "I will not tell you." Then his wife declared to him, "O King, if you do not tell me I will kill myself." The King answered her, "Wait till I have taken a walk, and I will come back and tell you." Then he went out to take a walk.

The Serpent-king produced by magic a flock of some hundreds of sheep which were crossing a stream. One sheep, which was with young, cried out to the ram, "Come back and fetch me." The ram answered, "I could by no means carry you across the stream." The sheep replied, "If you do not carry me across the river, I will kill myself. Do not you see that the King of the country is about to die for the sake of his wife?" The ram answered her, "The King is a fool to die for his wife. You may die. Does that mean that I shall have no more sheep?" At hearing these words the King thought to himself, "King as I am of the whole realm I am not as wise as that ram." When he returned home his wife said to him, "If you do not explain to me why you laughed, I will kill myself." The King answered her, "You are at perfect liberty to kill yourself; it will be a very good job if you do; I have plenty of wives in my harem; what need have I of you?"

¹ We must understand that the King is in danger of death if ever he reveals to anybody that he understands the

language of animals (Note of E. Chavannes)

The Master said, "The man who would kill himself for the sake of a woman is a great fool." ¹

A Malay version of the story runs as follows :

The King of Hindoostan had a very beautiful wife of whom he was very fond. He was also devoted to the chase, and one day he saw a very pretty female snake toying with a very ugly male snake. He drew his sword and killed the male snake. The female snake was wounded, but escaped. She hastened to her husband, and when he asked her why she was wounded, she said that the King had tried to seize her, and that, failing in the attempt on her virtue, he had struck at her with his sword. So her husband, the King of Snakes, resolved to kill the King of Hindoostan for having made love to his wife. But in the King of Hindoostan's palace he heard the King relating the affair of the snakes to his wife, and so he learned the truth of the matter. He thereupon showed himself to the King, and told him that he had come to kill him, but that now he would reward him by teaching him to understand all languages, including the language of animals. At the same time he warned the King that only one man could possess this knowledge at a time, and that if he imparted the knowledge to another he would die. Then he took his leave, went home, and slew his false and faithless wife, the female snake.

Some time afterwards the King of Hindoostan, on his return from hunting, was being refreshed by his wife with perfumes. At the same time he heard two cockroaches on his pillow talking to each other. The female cockroach asked the male cockroach to steal some of the perfume which the Queen had let fall in order that she (the female cockroach) might in like manner apply it to her husband (the male cockroach), but the latter replied that the Queen would be much frightened. This caused the King to burst out laughing. When the Queen asked him why he laughed, he told her that he had learned the language of animals, and how he had done so. Thenceforth the Queen was always coaxing him to teach her to understand the language of animals,

¹ E. Chavannes, *Cinq Cents Contes et Apologues extraits du Tripitaka Chinois et traduits en français*, i. (Paris, 1910), No 112 (*Trip.*, xix. 7,

p. 21 v^o), pp. 382-383. As to the collection of stories and its author, or rather translator, Seng-houei, see Chavannes' Introduction, pp. 1599.

although she knew that it would entail his death if he complied. She threatened to kill herself if he did not tell her. As he could not bear to see her die or to live without her, he had resolved to impart the secret to her, and only asked for a respite of seven days, during which he made merry. On the seventh day he was sitting with his wife on a beautiful green islet in a little lake in his garden, and there he heard a conversation between a pair of goats. The she-goat was far gone with young, and asked the he-goat to fetch her some of the fine grass of the islet. The he-goat plunged into the water, but finding he could not reach the island he turned back. However, the she-goat persisted in her demand, and said she could never get over it if she did not obtain her wish. "Do as you like," replied her mate; "if I perish, you can get another husband, and if you perish I can get another wife. For I am not as the King of Hindoostan, who does all that his wife tells him to do." The King of Hindoostan took the hint, and when his wife again asked him to teach her the language of animals, and again threatened to kill herself if he refused, he gave her the same answer that the he-goat gave the she-goat. And the Queen did not kill herself after all ¹

As we shall see presently, this Malay version of the story agrees closely with a Turkish version, from which it may be derived directly or indirectly.

A Mongolian version of the story is contained in the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Kasna Chan*. It runs thus :

Bikarmatshita had returned home with his wife Nargi to his royal parents. While the pair were eating sweetmeats, a morsel of the pastry fell on the ground. An animal ² came, picked up the pastry, and carried it off to its hole. Another animal of the same sort came out and said, "Comrade, if you do not give me a bit of the pastry you have picked up, I will eat you and the pastry to boot." The other animal said, "Much of the pastry has fallen to the ground beside Bikarmatshita, go and eat it." Bikarmatshita heard that

¹ J. Brandes, "Iets over de Papegaai-boek, zooals het bij de Maleiers voorkomt", *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, xli.

(1899), pp. 460 sq.

² In German, *ein Schiragoldschin*. I do not know what kind of creature this is.

and laughed. Then said Nargi, "Bikarmatshita, tell me at what you are laughing." He answered, "I laughed involuntarily." Thereupon Nargi said, "O King, since we are after all one body, why will you not tell me? If you will not tell me, I will not stay with you." When she moved away from him, Bikarmatshita took her by the hand and said, "Nargi, the teacher who taught me the speech of these animals¹ forbade me to reveal the speech to anybody. Were I to reveal it, I should die and my soul would go to hell. Therefore I have not told it." Nargi in a passion said, "You may die a thousand deaths, but I will not again sit down beside you." Bikarmatshita answered, "Wife, look at me, I will tell it to you. Nargi, stay quietly here; when I shall have found a place for my burial I will come back and tell you."

In order that he might not hurt the feelings of any living creature, he spared the feelings of his wife and was ready to sacrifice his own life. So he looked about for a burial place for himself, marked it out, and then turned to go home. On the way he saw many goats near a well. An old she-goat said to her kid, "Are you not ashamed to lie all day long on the ground sucking at my teats? For once in a way jump over that well; come and play with me! Quick, quick!" But the kid said, "Would you have me fall into the well and be drowned? Am I such a fool as Bikarmatshita? I am not the sort of person to go at a woman's word and look out for a place to die in." When Bikarmatshita heard that, he went home in great haste, gave his wife a sound drubbing, and cast her out of the house. While he was engaged in chastizing her, the Bodhisattvas (the future Buddhas) and everybody else rejoiced, and a rain of flowers fell down from heaven.²

A Persian version of the story runs as follows:

Once upon a time there was a hunter whose name was Adagar. One day, when he was out hunting with his brothers on the mountains, he saw a black snake and a white

¹ The *Schragoldschin*

² B. Laufer, "Funf indische Fabeln aus dem Mongolischen von Hans Conon von der Gabelentz", *Zeitschrift*

der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft, li. (1898), pp. 287 sq. The stories in question are translated from an unpublished manuscript in the Royal Library at Berlin.

snake fighting. The Black Snake prevailed and gave chase to the White Snake. The hunter's heart was grieved, and he placed an arrow on the string of his bow and shot at the Black Snake. But the arrow hit the tail of the White Snake and knocked it off. Deeply grieved, he called to his brothers and said, "Come on and let us go home." And home he went inconsolable, and though his wife tried to cheer him, and baked a cake for him, he would not eat it, and refused to be comforted.

Now the White Snake was the daughter of the King of the Fairies (*Peris*), and she went to her father and said to him, "O King, a human being has shot off my tail." "Very good," said the King, "do you know what you must do?" "No, I don't," said she. "Well," said he, "go to where the man is sitting; then if he is cheerful and in good spirits, creep into his shoe, and as soon as ever he puts his foot in it, bite his ankle. But if he is sad and sorrowful, do nothing to him, but come back here quickly."

"Good," said she, and she went and crept into the man's shoe. There she saw that he was so distressed that he would not even eat his dinner, but sat with folded hands and his head bowed down on his knees. So she came back and told her father, the King of the Fairies. "Ah, now I know," said he.

Next morning the Fairy King sent a messenger to the hunter to say that the King had a piece of business with him. So the hunter went to the King, and the King asked him, "Why did you shoot off the White Snake's tail?" Thereupon the hunter began to weep, and said, "O King, I shot at the Black Snake, but by chance the arrow hit the White one, and so grieved am I for the White Snake that now my heart is become like roasted meat."

The King began to laugh and said, "O man-born, tell me now whatever you would like to have as a gift." "I want no gift," replied the hunter, "except that I may understand the speech of every created thing." Now, since these people were not really snakes but fairies (*peris*), whatever they willed came to pass with them. So the Fairy King granted to the hunter the power to understand the language of all created things. "Now go," said he, "but tell your

secret to no one, otherwise you will die." The hunter then took his leave and departed.

Time passed, and through his knowledge of the language of dogs Adagar had acquired a flock of sheep. One day it chanced that one of his ewes had lambed, and he was holding its head while his wife was milking it. Just then a lamb came up and said, "Give me a little milk, Mamma."¹ "You are perfectly shameless," replied the ewe. "Can't you see that my master is holding my head and my master's wife is milking me? Leave me alone till I am free. When I'm at liberty I'll give you all you want." Adagar laughed. His wife adjured him, saying, "You must tell me what you are laughing at." "What business is that of yours?" said he. "If I tell you, I shall die." However, he went on, "Do you know what you must do?" "No," said she. "Well," said he, "first have four sheep killed, and cook freshly a lot of rice, and collect a great deal of ghee, and cook my funeral alms.² After that, assemble all my relations and all your relations, and then I will tell you what I was laughing at." The wife agreed, and collected all their relations and set the broth to cook on the fire.

Now Adagar the Hunter had a dog and a cock and a cat. The dog put its head down on its paws and sat in dejection, but the cock pecked at the dough and dipped his beak into the broth. The dog looked up and said to him, "You are perfectly shameless; this is the funeral alms of your master that is standing on the fireplace." "You are a great fool," retorted the cock, "our master is a miserable hen-pecked creature." "How so?" asked the dog. "I'll tell you," said the cock; "our mistress is a mischievous woman. She asks her husband his secret, and he loves her very much and will tell her, but when he tells her he will die. As soon as ever he is dead his wife will grab all the gear, marry some blackguard or other, and kick her first husband's grave. Why should anyone give himself a headache over what a couple of words in black and white could set right?"

¹ In the original "it is not a lamb who interrupts to ask its mother for milk but a ram who comes to claim the ewe for intercourse" (Major Lori-

mer, in a letter to J. G. F.).

² When a person has died, food is distributed as alms by his family to his relations and others.

"The cock speaks truly," said Adagar to himself, and he got up and went into the assembly "Brothers of my wife, and my own brothers," said he, "my wife has been nagging at me in this way to tell her my secret, and if I do tell her I shall die that very instant. That being so, I have decided not to tell her, but to give her a bill of divorce." They all said, "Very well. We certainly will not make ourselves responsible for driving you to your death. Divorce her."

Then he quickly instructed a mullah to make out a bill of divorce, and he handed it to her, and she took her departure. But some time later she stole a hundred tumans from her brothers and brought them as a bribe to her husband, and he married her again, and they minded their own business and lived at ease.¹

The story of the *Language of Animals*, with which we are here concerned, occurs in a Turkish version of the *Tutî-Nameh*, or *Parrot-book*, a Persian collection of popular tales which is itself a translation of an Indian original, the *Śuka-saptati*, or 'Seventy Tales of a Parrot', written partly in Sanskrit and partly in Prakrit. Nothing is known about the author of the *Śuka-saptati* or *Parrot-book*, nor about the time when it was composed. The Persian translation of it, under the title of *Tutî-Nameh*, was made early in the fourteenth century A.D. The uncouth quality of this rendering induced Nachshabi, a contemporary of Hafiz and Sadi, to remould its matter in an artistic poem. A Turkish translation, based on Nachshabi's work, was executed about a century after his time.² In it the story of the *Language of Animals*, stripped of some of the flowers of rhetoric with which Nachshabi or another had tricked it out, runs as follows :

¹ D. L. R. Lorimer and E. O. Lorimer, *Persian Tales written down for the first time in the original Kermānī and Bakhshārī* (London, 1919), No. xxxiv., "The Story of the Hunter and the White Snake", pp. 225-231. I have shortened the story.

² Theodor Benfey, "Ein Märchen von der Thiersprache, Quelle und Verbreitung", *Orient und Occident*, II (Göttingen, 1864), p. 157; A. A. Mac-

donell, *India's Past*, p. 128, *id*, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 375 sq. There is a German translation of the *Śuka-saptati*. See *Śukasaptati, das Indische Papageienbuch, aus dem Sanskrit übersetzt von Richardt Schmidt* (München, 1913). But the story of the *Language of Animals*, with which we are here concerned, does not occur, so far as I see, in this version of the *Śuka-saptati*.

In the history books it is written that an Indian Sultan once went out to hunt. Coming to a lonely place he saw a female snake wantoning with a male snake of another sort. Indignant at their unnatural union he drew his sword and struck at the female snake, but only succeeded in cutting off a piece of her tail. She glided away and disappeared into her hole. There her husband, the male snake, found her and questioned her about her hurt. She told him that the Sultan of the city had seen her and, falling in love with her gay colours, had attempted to seduce her, but strong in her virtue she had withstood him, whereupon he fell into a rage and wounded her.

Fired with jealousy her mate crept into the Sultan's palace and hid under the monarch's bed, intending to sting him to death as soon as he should have fallen asleep. Presently the Sultan's wife came and would have lain down beside him on the bed, but he repulsed her and drove her away. When she wept and asked him why he did so, he told her what he had seen of the behaviour of the two snakes, adding that the sight had so convinced him of the lewdness and lechery of the female sex that he was resolved to have nothing more to do with women for the rest of his life.

Listening under the bed to the conversation of the royal pair the male snake was now fully convinced of the Sultan's innocence ; so crawling to the monarch's feet he acknowledged himself to be the husband of the wanton, craved the Sultan's pardon for his former intention of murdering him, and begged to know what he could do for him, assuring him that any wish he might express would be granted. The Sultan said, " It is my dearest wish to learn the language of animals." The snake replied, " O Sultan, your wish is possible, but you must promise me not to reveal the secret to any woman, for if you do you will infallibly die on the spot." After giving the Sultan this solemn warning, the snake instructed him in the language of animals and took his departure.

Next morning the Sultan's banished wife, losing patience, came to her husband's bed and began to soft-sawder him with rose-water and sandal-wood oil, which she poured on his feet, intending thereafter to rub her face on them. It

chanced that in the room there was a cage with a pair of turtle-doves in it. The hen bird said to the cock bird, "O that I had rose-water and sandal-wood oil to pour on your feet and then to rub my face on them!" When the Sultan heard that, he began to laugh. His wife thought he was mocking her. She flew into a rage and said with an oath, "You must tell me why you laughed. If you do not, I will kill myself."

The Sultan tried to soothe her, saying, "I did not laugh at you. If I were to tell you, I would surely die. Do not press me, else you will be the cause of my death." But she insisted, and when he could no longer withstand her importunity he said, "I will tell you it in a lonely place, for when I have told it I must die." So he gave orders that every one should quit the palace garden where he proposed to reveal the fatal secret. This quieted his wife.

When day broke and not a soul was in the garden, the Sultan and his wife entered it. They came to a well where, by the providence of God, two sheep were feeding. The ewe went to the edge of the well, and seeing some fresh green grass in it she said to the ram, "If you do not fetch that grass for me to eat, I will throw myself into the well." The ram looked at the grass and said that he could not fetch it. "Were I to grant your wish," said he, "I should lose my life, and it would be folly in me to kill myself lest you should commit suicide. I am not like the Sultan to throw away my life for the sake of a woman. If you wish to make an end of yourself, pray do so. It is perfectly indifferent to me whether you do so or not. There you are and there is the well! If you are bent on dying you could never do it easier than now."

The Sultan laid to heart the sage speech of the ram. He took back his word, and all the prayers and entreaties of his wife could not wring his secret from him. So he continued to live and reign.¹

A version of the story occurs in a Georgian collection of

¹ *Tut-Nameh, Das Papageienbuch, eine Sammlung orientalischen Erzählungen, nach der türkischen Bearbeitung zum ersten Male übersetzt von Georg Rosen, u. (Leipzig, 1858), pp.*

236-241. Compare Th. Benfey, "Ein Märchen von der Thiersprache, Quelle und Verbreitung", *Orient und Occident*, u. (Göttingen, 1864), pp. 157 sq.

stories which was made by a certain Orbeliani about the year 1700. The work exists in a Russian translation by Tsagareli. The sources from which Orbeliani drew the stories are uncertain; the Russian translator thinks that they were mainly derived from oral tradition. This Georgian version runs as follows:

The hero of the tale is a righteous man who has a volatile wife. One day, as he sat eating on the bank of a river, he threw some of his food into the water. A man rose from the river and in return for the food cast upon the water he taught the generous giver the language of all animals by putting his tongue into the other's mouth. A young crow attempted to peck out the hero's eyes, but the hero let the bird escape, and for this good deed he was rewarded by the mother crow with the revelation of a buried treasure. Then follows a conversation between a foal and its mother, a pregnant mare, like the similar dialogue between a horse and a mare in the Slavonian version, to which the Georgian version bears a close resemblance¹ The man laughs at the talk of the mare and foal, and is about to tell his wife the reason of his laughter when he hears a little dog, with tears in its eyes, lamenting to a cock that his master must die, all for the sake of his wife. Thereupon the cock summons all the hens of the village, struts round them, and says to the man, "I have sixty wives and not one of them durst pick up a grain of corn without my leave. And you are dying all through a woman! Go and thrash her within an inch of her life." The man does so and thus escapes death. This story is said to be known all over Georgia.²

An Armenian version of the story runs as follows:

In autumn, when the weather grows cold, the serpents gather before the gate of the greatest and richest of their number. He usually has his abode in a high place, in a cleft of the rocks facing the sun. They bring him presents of all sorts, all that has fallen into their hands, royal jewels and diamonds. Then each relates the adventures that have befallen him. A scribe writes down everything that is worth recording, and this writing is sent by two royal serpents to

¹ See above, pp. 112 sq.

² Antti Aarne, "Zum Märchen von der Tiersprache", *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, xx. (1900), p. 303.

their Great King, who dwells at Baghdad and Bassora, and who governs the whole nation of serpents both on land and sea. Thus he receives presents of great value and takes note of the letters that come to him from the four quarters of the world. He administers justice, punishing and rewarding each according to his deserts.

The son of the King of the Serpents, being vizier of the country of Diarbekir, wrote to his father: "O King, live for ever! May God increase thy greatness! But know that this year thy daughter-in-law and thy grandchildren have been sick, and that the doctors ordered them to go for a cure to the waters of Bingeul, there to take the baths and to eat a petal of the flower *hamaspiur* (*Lychnis orientalis*). So we bestirred ourselves and sent them with a numerous suite. We wrote to the governor to pay them the honours due to their rank and to facilitate their journey. When they reached Bingeul they sent a letter to the general in command at Mouch in Daron. He came with many serpents and ordered thy daughter-in-law to be put to the torture.

"The serpents who escorted the lady exerted themselves valiantly to defend her. There was a great battle on the top of Bingeul. There chanced to be there one Semon, who kept the flocks of a merchant in order to send them to Scham (Damascus) and Aleppo. Semon took a cudgel and rushed into the thick of the serpents of Daron, he slew them and scattered them, and thy daughter-in-law was saved, with her children and servants. So there are good folk even among men. O Great King, I will punish them of Daron. But it is for thee to reward, in a manner befitting thy Greatness, the man who saved thy daughter-in-law."

The King of the Serpents took store of precious stones and came in great state to his palace on the road to Aleppo. He posted sentinels, and lo! one came to tell him that Semon had passed by. The serpents performed some magic rites, and Semon thought he saw the world turned upside down. His companions had left him, and he found himself alone with thousands of serpents in front of him.

One of the serpents took a paper in which the noble deed done by Semon was recorded in complimentary terms, and this report he read out before the King and the princes.

They decided that Semon might take as much gold and diamonds as he pleased, and that, if he had a desire in his heart, it should be granted him.

"I should like", said he, "to understand the language of all animals, reptiles, and birds." "Be it so," said the King, "but if you tell anybody whatever what you shall have seen and heard of the animals, you shall die."

Semon went home. He understood the words of animals, reptiles, and birds. He perceived that they knew all the secrets of men, and that they told one to another the things that should come to pass. His hair stood up on his head, and what between laughter and fright he found himself at Death's door. He retraced his steps and came to the village. He heard the cats, the dogs, the cocks and the hens telling that Semon's pockets and the breast of his coat were full of gold and precious stones. He went into his house and threw all the treasures he was carrying at the feet of his wife.

"Where does all that come from?" she persisted in asking.

"Enjoy it and ask no questions," said Semon. He heard the house-dog and the fowls talking of all that was happening in the house. He laughed, and sometimes too he was angry. His wife noticed it and would know what it was all about. She besought him, she wept, she fumed. At last one day Semon promised to tell her on the morrow all about it.

But the dog heard him. The same evening the cock was driving his hens before him, with a sound like *cluck, cluck, cluck*; he entered by the door. The dog said to him, "Why are you clucking like that? Our master has promised his wife to tell her everything to-morrow evening, and he will die. They will come and cut your throat and kill me, and rob and demolish our master's house."

"Since everything must come to an end some day," answered the cock, "it may just as well come at once. As for me, I have forty hens, and they all obey me. If our master spoiled his wife a little less, it would be better for her; he himself would not die, and none of these troubles would come upon us."

Semon heard this talk and took a lesson from it. He

got up, grasped a hazel rod, went to his wife, and thrashed her within an inch of her life ¹

A Syrian version of the story runs thus :

Once on a time, near Damascus, there was a peasant who understood the language of animals. He had an ox, with which he tilled the soil, and an ass which he used to ride. One day, when the ox was ploughing the fields, while the ass was browsing on the grass, the peasant left off his work and lay down under a tree. The ass went up to the ox, and the ox said to him, "Curse you ! You eat grass and barley the whole blessed day without doing anything at all, whereas I work from morning to evening, and all the night you will not let me sleep for your roaring and braying." "My dear fellow," answered the ass, "this evening you will make believe to be ill, not touching your fodder, and when your master comes and sees you in that state, he will give you two or three days' rest." "Yes, by Gad," said the ox, "that is what I will do."

However, the master had heard their talk and thought to himself, "Cursed be the father of the ass ! I will make him work instead of the ox." He got up and returned to the house, riding the ass and followed by the ox. Then he brought barley for them both ; but when he went at midnight and opened the door of the cattle-stall he saw that the ox was asleep and had eaten none of its fodder. He shut the door and went and slept till morning. Then he returned to the stall and said to the ox, "You are sick to-day ; I will leave you here, and the ass shall do your work." So he took the yoke and put it on the neck of the ass, who thought, "Curse the scoundrel ! It was a devilish bad idea of mine to advise the ox to feign sickness."

The peasant went with the ass to his field and ploughed with him till set of sun. When the ass came back worn out with weariness, he said to the ox, "Your master said to-day that he will slaughter you to-morrow, because he thinks you will die at any rate." At that the ox woke up and began to kick the crib till it fell down. The peasant came, saying, "Ah, there you are all right again, old boy !" So he gave

¹ Fr Macler, *Contes Arméniens* (Paris, 1905), No. xiii, "Semôn", pp 103-109.

him a lot of oats and a sack of chopped straw to boot. The ox devoured it all and lowed to show that he wanted more. The peasant gave it to him and laughed.

Then his wife said to him, "Why do you laugh?" He said, "Something happened to me that made me laugh." "No," said she, "you are making fun of me." He denied it, but when she demanded the cause of his laughter, he said, "I cannot tell you. If I were to tell you, I should die." She insisted, and on his refusal she said, "If you do not tell me I will return to my family." The peasant was very fond of his wife and said to her, "I will tell you to-morrow morning, but after that I shall die." "That is all one to me," said she, "you must relate it to me." They went to bed, but while his wife slept the peasant lay awake.

Suddenly he heard one of the hens saying to the cock, "Our master is going to die to-morrow." "Why so?" asked the cock. "Because he is about to tell his wife the trick of the ass and the ox," said the hen. "On my word," said the cock, "our master is a fool. I have twenty wives, and they are all afraid of me, and he, who has only one wife, does not know how to manage her." "What would you have him do?" asked the hen. "He should take a stick," replied the cock, "and give her fifty blows on the back every day till she says, 'Forgive me! I no longer ask you to tell it me.'"

On hearing these words the peasant said to himself, "Egad, the cock has more sense than me." He got up, and taking a stick said to his wife, "Well, do you want to know?" "I want you to tell me why you laughed," replied she. "Look here," said he, "I am the husband and you are the wife. Would you order me about? May God curse your father and mother!" So saying he whacked her with the stick till she cried, "Forgive me! I no longer want you to tell it me!" So he let her be, and from that time she never asked anything of him, and the peasant thought, "God bless the cock which gave such good advice! But for it I must have died."¹

This Syrian story, as the editor of it remarks, is clearly a variant of the version in the *Arabian Nights*, which has

¹ J. Oestrup, *Contes de Damas* (Leyde, 1897), No. vii., "Le paysan, le bœuf et l'âne", pp. 97, 99, 101. The

intermediate pages contain the Syrian text.

already been laid before the reader.¹ The same is true of two Jewish stories, except that in one of them the hero has obtained a knowledge of the language of animals as a gift from the wise King Solomon.² In the other version, taken down in Palestine, it is merely said that "there was once a merchant who understood the language of beasts".³ But both these Jewish versions follow the story in the *Arabian Nights* so closely that it would be at once needless and tedious to repeat them. Their text is given in the Appendix (pp. 505 *sqq.*).

In our survey of the geographical diffusion of the tale we may now turn from Asia to Africa, where the story has been recorded at various points from the north to the south of the continent.

A Berber version of the story runs as follows :

Long ago there was a man who had much gear. One day he went into a butcher's shop. A greyhound came and gnawed some bones. The butcher struck him, and the dog yelped. At the sight the man was touched with pity. He bought of the butcher a bit of meat and threw it to the dog, who took it and went away. But the dog was really the son of a king who dwelt under ground.

Fortune changed with our man ; he lost all his gear and betook himself to washing people's clothes for a livelihood. One day he went to wash something ; he spread it out on the white sand to dry. A jerboa appeared with a golden ring in its ear. The man ran after it, killed it, hid the ring, kindled a fire, cooked the animal and ate it. A woman came out of the earth, laid hold of him, and asked him, "Did you not see my son, who has a ring in his ear?" "I saw no boy," replied he, "but I saw a jerboa that had a ring in its ear." "It was my son," quoth she. She drew him under ground and said to him, "You have eaten my son. You have parted me from him. I will part you from your children ; you shall serve me in his stead."

That day he who had been changed into a greyhound saw the man there and said to him, "It was you who bought

¹ Above, pp. 114 *sq.*

² L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. iv. (Philadelphia, 1913), pp. 138-141.

³ J. E. Hanauer, *Folk-lore of the Holy Land, Moslem, Christian and Jewish*, edited by M. Pickthall (London, 1910), pp. 258-260

meat for a greyhound and threw it to him " "It was I," said the man. "I am that greyhound," replied the other; "who brought you here?" "A woman," answered the other, and he related the whole of his adventure. "Go and complain to the king," said his friend; "I am his son. I will go and tell him, 'This man has done me a kindness.' When he shall say to you, 'Go to the treasury and take as much money as you can,' answer, 'I don't want any, I want you to spit the blessing into my mouth.' If he asks you, 'Who told you to say that?' reply, 'Nobody.'"

The man went to the king and complained of the woman. The king sent for her and said to her, "Why did you take this man captive?" "He ate my son," said she. "Why did your son turn himself into a jerboa?" asked the king; "when men see one of them, they catch it and eat it." Then, addressing the man, he said, "Give her back the ear-ring." He gave it back to her. "Go," continued the king, "take back this man to the place whence you brought him." The king's son then said to his father, "This man has done me a kindness. He must be rewarded for it." The king said to him, "Go to the treasury and take as much money as you can." "I do not want money," answered he, "I wish you to spit the blessing into my mouth." "Who has told you that?" asked the king. "Nobody," said the man. "You will not be able to bear it," said the king. "I shall be able," said the man. "When I shall have spat into your mouth," said the king, "you will understand the language of beasts and birds; you will know what they say when they talk, but if you reveal it to people, you will die." "I will not reveal it," said the man. The king spat into his mouth and sent him away, saying to the woman, "Go, take him to the place where you found him." She went and took him to the place.

He mounted his ass and returned to his house. He tethered his beast and took back the washing to the people. Then he mounted his ass again to go and look for some fuller's earth. He was in the act of digging when he heard a raven in the air saying, "Dig down. Thou wilt sing when God shall enrich thee." He understood what the bird said, dug down, and found a treasure. He filled a panier with it, put a little earth on the top, and returned home. Then he

came back to the spot several times. On one of these occasions his ass met a mule, who said to her, "Still working away!" She answered, "My master has found riches and is carrying them off." The mule replied, "When you come among people, do you just jib and drop the panier on the ground. The folk will see it, the murder will be out, and your master will leave you in peace." The man had heard their talk and he filled the panier with nothing but earth. When they came among people, the ass backed and dropped the panier to the ground, and her master beat her to his heart's content. Then he resumed the business of carrying off the treasure and became a merchant of good standing.

Now in his house he had fowls and a bitch. One day he went into his barn; a hen followed him and ate some grains of corn. A cock said to her, "Bring me a little." The hen answered him, "Eat for yourself." At that their master fell a-laughing. His wife asked him, "What makes you laugh?" "Nothing," says he. "You are laughing at me," says she. "Not a bit of it," says he. "You must tell me what you are laughing at," says she. "If I tell you, I shall die," says he. "You shall tell me and die to-night," says she. He brought forth corn and said to his wife, "Give alms." He asked people in and made them eat, and when they went forth he set food before the bitch, but she would not touch it. The neighbour's dog came, as he did every day, to eat with the bitch. That day he found the food untouched. "Come, eat," says he. "No," says she. "Why?" says he. She told him: "On hearing the fowls talk, my master fell a-laughing; his wife asked him, 'Why do you laugh?' 'If I tell you,' says he, 'I shall die.' 'Tell me and die,' says she. That," added the hen, "is why he has given alms, for when he has revealed the secret he will die, and I shall find nobody like him." The dog answered, "Since he understands the language of animals, let him take a stick and lay on to her till she has had her fill of it, and as he beats he shall say, 'That was why I laughed! That was why I laughed! That was why I laughed!' till she says, 'Reveal nothing to me.'"

The man heard the talk of the dogs; he went and took a stick. When his wife and he went to bed, "Tell it to me," quoth she. Then he drew out the stick and hit her, saying

to her, "That is why I laughed!" till she began to cry out, "Don't tell it me! Don't tell it me!" So he let her be. When the dogs heard that, they were glad, ran on the terrace of the house, gambolled and ate their food. From that day on the wife never said to her husband, "Tell me." They lived in peace. May God forgive me for what I have left undone.¹

In Bornu, formerly a powerful independent kingdom of Central Africa, the story has been recorded in the native Bornu or Kanuri language. Translated into English it runs as follows :

"There was a Servant of God who had one wife and one horse; but his wife was one-eyed: and they lived in their house. Now, this Servant of God understood the language of the beasts of the forest, when they spoke, and of the birds of the air, when they talked, as they flew by; this Servant of God also understood the cry of the hyena, when it arose at night in the forest, and came to the houses, and cried near them; so, likewise, when his horse was hungry, and neighed, he understood what it neighed, rose up, brought the horse grass, and then returned and sat down.

"It happened one day, that birds had their talk, as they were flying by above, and the Servant of God understood what they talked. This caused him to laugh, whereupon his wife said to him, 'What dost thou hear that thou laughest?' He replied to his wife, 'I shall not tell thee what I hear, and why I laugh.' The woman said to her husband, 'I know why thou laughest: thou laughest at me, because I am one-eyed.' The man then said to his wife, 'I saw that thou wast one-eyed before I loved thee, and before we married and sat down together in our house.' When the woman heard her husband's word, she was quiet.

"But on one occasion, at night, as they were lying on their bed, and it was past midnight, it happened that a rat played with his wife at the top of the house, and that both fell to the ground, whereupon the wife of the rat said to her husband, 'Thy sport is bad: thou saidst to me that thou wouldst play, but when we came together, we fell to the ground so that I broke my back.' When the Servant of God

¹ R Basset, *Nouveaux Contes Berbères* (Paris, 1897), No. 108, "Le Langage des Bêtes", pp. 119-124.

heard the talk of the rat's wife, as he was lying on his bed, he laughed. Now as soon as he laughed, his wife arose, seized him, and said to him, as she held him fast, 'Now this time I will not let thee go out of this house, except thou tell me what thou hearest, and why thou laughest.' The man begged the woman, saying, 'Let me go!' but the woman would not listen to her husband's entreaty, and said to him again, 'I shall not let thee go, except thou tell me what thou hearest to-night, and why thou didst laugh.'

"When the man had heard the word of his wife, he said to her, 'I am God's: let me go and I will let thee know why I was laughing.' The woman then relaxing her hold, her husband said to her, 'The reason why I laugh, is this, that I understand the language of the beasts of the field, as they talk, and what the birds of the air say, as they fly past, and that I understand the cry of the hyena, when it gets up in the forest and cries near the town in order to carry off people's goats; also that I understand the neighing of our horse in the stable, as it neighs when it is hungry, so that I may arise and go to give it grass.' Then he and his wife were at peace with each other, and slept on their bed.

When they had slept, and it was day, the Servant of God arose, and went to his horse; but when it neighed, he did no longer understand it; so as to the birds of the air, which talk, when they see that it is day, he did no longer understand their talk, on listening; neither did he any longer understand the cry of the beasts of the field, when they cried, nor the cry of the hyena, when it came near the town and cried. So he went, sat down in his house, hung down his head, and said to himself, 'If a man opens and tells his inward thoughts to a woman, God will punish him for it: formerly I understood the language of all the beasts of the field, when they talked, and of the birds of the air, and of the rats in the house, and the neighing of my horse; but to-day Satan has taken me out of the (right) way: when I told my secret to a woman, our Lord shut mine ears; therefore, henceforth let no man tell all his secrets to a woman!'"¹

¹ Rev. S. W. Koelle, *African Native Literature, or Proverbs, Tales, Fables, and Historical Fragments in the Kanuri or Bornu Language, to which are*

added a Translation of the above and a Kanuri-English Vocabulary (London, 1854), pp. 143-145, "Story of a Servant of God".

An Abyssinian version, taken down in the Tigrē dialect, runs as follows :

“ God gave a man knowledge of the language of [all] the wild and domestic animals. But he said to him : ‘ Whatever thou mayest hear of the language of all the animals, do not tell it to men , when thou hast heard it thyself keep silent ; if thou tellest it, then thou shalt die.’ And the man said : ‘ Very well ’ And the man knew the language of all the animals, domestic and wild ; and whenever he heard it, although he knew the meaning, he kept silent.

“ Then one day the man said to his wife : ‘ Let us lie down that we may rest a little ! ’ And when they had lain down two kids that were in the house said to each other : ‘ Let us lie down too ; our masters are also lying down.’ When the man heard their talk he smiled. And his wife said to him : ‘ Why doest thou smile ? What hast thou perhaps done unto me that thou hast smiled ? ’ He answered : ‘ I have smiled at myself, not at thee.’ His wife said : ‘ Tell me then why thou hast smiled.’ Now the man feared death if he should tell her ; so he said to her : ‘ I have smiled for nothing.’

“ But his wife continued : ‘ Either tell me about what thou hast laughed, or leave me ! ’ The man, however, did not know divorce, and he wanted to tell her. But he said to her : ‘ Wait that I tell it to thee ! ’ Then he prepared himself for his death : he shaved and bathed ; and he brought the cows for his funeral sacrifice and tied them. But one cow of them he killed, that he might himself taste the meat of the cows of his funeral.

“ And when the cow was skinned, the dog of the man took a piece of the vertebrae and ran with it into the side-room to gnaw it. Thereupon another dog came to that dog to gnaw the vertebrae with him. But the dog drove him off from the bone and snarled at him to scare him away. And the other dog said to him : ‘ Of [all] the masters thy master is most despicable who ties the cows of his funeral sacrifice instead of divorcing his wife. And of [all] the dogs thou art most despicable, who keepest away thy brother from the bone ! ’ And after he had spoken thus he went off.

“ The man heard the words which the dog said, and he knew that it was easier for him to divorce his wife than to

die ; before that, he had not known much of divorce and had chosen death instead. So the man divorced his wife and was saved from death. And from this time onward divorce became customary. [This is what] they say.”¹

Another Abyssinian version of the story, taken down in the Saho dialect, runs in an abridged form as follows :

A man who, on account of a quarrel with his brother, had fallen out with all the world, set out one day to kill God. He met God, and God asked him, “Whither away ?” The man answered, “I am out to kill God.” God made Himself known to the man, and asked him what he wanted. Then the man answered, “I want nothing for myself but to understand every language which Thou hast created.” God bestowed on him the gift of understanding every language.

On the way the man lay down to sleep under a tree, and he heard two eagles speaking which had hidden a chest full of gold. He demanded and received from them the chest and the gold, and so he became a rich man and married a beautiful wife. By night he heard the he-goat saying to the she-goat, “Our master is now sleeping with his wife, so come thou that I may sleep with thee.” The man understood the talk and laughed. His wife insisted on knowing why he had laughed. Then he said, “Since I must die as soon as I have told thee, make ready my death-feast.” The man’s dog heard that and told it to his friend. But his friend said, “Thy master is a fool ; he should let his wife go hang and not reveal the secret to her.”

This story is clearly a variant of the tale in the *Arabian Nights*²

In East Africa the story has been recorded in the Swahili language. In an abridged form it runs as follows :

God gave the Sultan Seliman bin Daud (that is, King Solomon, son of David) the power of understanding the language of birds and of all animals both on land and in the sea, also the language of the winds and of the trees. So the

¹ Eno Littmann, *Publications of the Princeton Expedition to Abyssinia*, vol ii ; *Tales, Customs, Names, and Dances of the Tigre Tribes*, English Translation (Leyden, 1910), No. 76, “The Tale of a Man who knew the

Language of Animals”, pp. 95 sq.

² D. H. Müller, in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, xlv. (1892), pp. 401 sq., reviewing *Die Sahosprache von Leo Reinisch*, 2 Bande (Wien, 1889-1890).

Sultan appointed the animals their various tasks, and they obeyed him. Among other things he ordered the asses to carry stones and clay. The asses did so, and when they were very tired they consulted the ox, who advised them to pretend to be sick next morning. The asses did as he advised, and the servants, on finding the asses apparently sick, reported it to the Sultan, who ordered that all the oxen should be set to carry stones and clay. After toiling thus for many days the ox said to the ass, "I have heard that the Sultan will slaughter you to-morrow if you do not get up." Sitting with his wife, the Sultan heard these words of the ox and laughed. His wife asked him why he laughed. He said, "At nothing." But she insisted and said she would leave him if he did not tell her. Now the Sultan loved his wife and promised to let her know in seven days. But God had told the Sultan that if he revealed his knowledge of the language of birds and beasts to anyone he must die.

So all men and animals mourned that the Sultan must die. On the morning when he was to reveal the fatal secret the cocks crowed. The Sultan's dog went and seized the cocks. When the Sultan asked the dog why he did so, the dog answered, "These cocks are shameless. Every creature in the world mourns that thou must die, but the cock crows; he loves thee not." The cock said, "The Sultan has no sense. I have many wives; if one of them grows too proud, I beat her. But the Sultan has only one wife and is about to die on her account. If he took a stick and thrashed her, she would repent, and not wish to know why he laughed." When the Sultan heard that, he took a stick and struck his wife, and she said, "I repent; I do not wish to know why you laughed." Everybody rejoiced that the Sultan had recovered his life and health through the good sense of the cock.¹

In South Africa the story has been recorded among the Ba-Ronga, a Bantu tribe of Delagoa Bay in Portuguese East Africa. Their version of it, translated into English, runs thus :

¹ G. Lademann, *Tierfabeln und andere Erzählungen in Suaheli* (Berlin, 1910), No. 5, "Geschichte von Seliman

bin Daud", pp. 63-65 (*Archiv für das Studium deutscher Kolonialsprachen*, vol. xii., Berlin, 1910).

Once on a time there was a king who was so poor that he had to gain a livelihood by fishing. He caught little fishes and went and sold them. One day he saw a great serpent with seven heads. The monster said to him, "What are you doing here?" "I come a-fishing," said the king, "to gain my living, for I have nothing at all." "Very well," said the serpent, "I will give you much gold on condition that you give up to me the first thing you meet on going home." The king accepted all that wealth and went home.

On coming to his house he met his wife, who was with child. "Alas!" said he to himself, "I shall have to give to the serpent the child that will be born to me." The child was born; it was a boy. He grew and grew. One fine day the serpent came to claim him. The father called his son into the house and said to him, "My child, to-morrow I must go and throw you into the water in order to give you to the Great Serpent." "All right," replied the boy, "do as you think best."

That night the young lad sang the whole time. Two men clad in white came to him who said, "How can you sing? Don't you know that your father is going to give you up to the Great Serpent with seven heads?" "I know it very well," said he, "but what is the use? Since I shall be dead to-morrow, I must sing to-day." They said to him, "Do what we are about to bid you do. Ask your father for seven pitchers of milk and place them one at each of the doors of the rooms. You will see what will happen."

The young lad asked his father for seven pitchers, filled them with milk, and set them at the doors. Then, when night fell, he set himself to sing again the whole night long.

The Great Serpent came crawling and said, "I am hungry." The boy showed him a pitcher, the serpent drank the milk with one of his heads. He cried, "I am still hungry." The lad showed him the second pitcher, and so on with the rest till the serpent's seven heads had finished drinking.

Then the serpent said to him, "Very good, I have drunk my fill. Now put out your tongue, and I will write something on it. But you must not tell it to your father nor your mother nor your brothers, and when you are married you

must not say a word of it to your wife." The serpent did as he had said, and so departed. But the young man thereby acquired the gift of understanding what the animals said. He heard them talking; he laughed, but he spoke of it to nobody.

One day he went to his fields, riding on his ass, while the ox drew the plough. The ox looked disdainfully at the ass and said to him, "As for you, you are naught but an idler; you walk about, whereas I am yoked to this heavy plough." At that the lad burst out laughing.

The time came for him to marry; a wife was found for him, and the pair lived together.

One day some birds came and perched on the trees of the yard while the fowls were pecking at the corn on the ground. "The fowls are lucky," said the birds; "people set food out for them, whereas when we go to eat in the fields, they drive us away." At hearing that, the man laughed. Then his wife grew angry and said to him, "You are always mocking me because you find me ugly." "Not at all," said he, "I am not mocking you, I am only laughing." She would not listen to him and went into the house. He followed her. The cat was there at the time.

A cock came and began to peck at the crumbs on the floor. The cat said to him, "Are you not ashamed to come into the room and gobble while the master is having a tiff with his wife?" "Not a bit," replied the cock, "I am not at all ashamed. Why should I bother? What are they wrangling about?" "O, she is vexed," said the cat, "because he is always laughing. He understands what we say, and she thinks that he is laughing at her. It is in vain that he defends himself. She is nettled at him." On hearing this talk the husband began to laugh. His wife burst into tears, saying, "Why do you think me such a silly? There you are, laughing at me again!" "Not at all," said he; "when I married you, did not I choose you just because you are pretty and clever?"

The cock said to the cat, "Among us, when a couple fall out, the husband takes a stick and brings his wife into a better frame of mind." Hearing these words the man went to look for a rod, and as his wife continued to taunt him with mocking her, he beat her soundly. "Pray forgive me,"

said she, "I will never again say that you are laughing at me." And she held her tongue.¹

In Europe the particular story of the *Language of Animals*, with which we are here concerned, is widely spread, and many examples of it have been recorded in many languages. A long list of them, some still in manuscript, has been given by Mr. Antti Aarne in his learned dissertation on the subject.² In the text, besides the old versions of Morlini and Straparola, I have cited a Slavonian and a Finnish version.³

The oldest European version of the story appears to be one which occurs in the popular mediæval story-book, the *Gesta Romanorum*. It runs thus :

Honorius once reigned mightily at Rome. In his kingdom there was a knight, who upon a day rode from one city to another and came by chance to a village which was all on fire. There he spied in a house an adder which whined and whimpered because it was surrounded by the flames. He took pity on it and ordered his servant to help the adder out of the fire. But the servant dissuaded him and refused to comply. Thereupon the knight took the fellow's pike, lifted the adder out of the fire, and went on his way. Now the knight was weary, so he halted in a meadow beside a cool spring and rested there. When they had sat there a short while, they saw the adder, which the knight had helped out of the fire, come hurrying after them. The servants would have hindered it, but the knight forbade them, and when the adder made up to them it ran to the knight and put a root into his mouth. No sooner was that done than he thought he heard someone saying to him, "Swallow it down, but tell nobody." As he understood what was said, he swallowed the root, and so the adder went on its way.

¹ Henri A. Junod, *Chants et Contes des Ba-Ronga* (Lausanne, 1897), No xxix, "Le jeune garçon et le Grand Serpent", pp. 314-317.

² Antti Aarne, *Der viersprachenkundige Mann und seine neugierige Frau* (Hamina, 1914), pp. 3-24 (*FF Communications*, No 15).

³ Above, pp. 112 *sqq*. What I have called a Slavonian is really a Bulgarian version. See L. Leger, *Recueil de*

Contes populaires Slaves (Paris, 1882), pp. 109-116; A. H. Wratislaw, *Sixty Folk-tales from exclusively Slavonic Sources* (London, 1889), pp. 199-203, where the tale is included among Bulgarian stories. For another translation of the Finnish version, besides the one I have quoted in the text (pp. 116 *sq*), see E. Beauvois, *Contes populaires de la Norvège, de la Finlande, et de la Bourgogne* (Paris, 1862), pp. 171-179.

The knight did not think much about it, and rode home to his own house. But it chanced one evening that he supped for his pleasure with his wife in the garden, and as he sat there he heard a great twittering of sparrows, which had quarrelled and were making it up again among themselves ; it was all about a heap of threshed millet in a barn which some of the sparrows had devoured against the will of the others, and in the squabble one sparrow had been pecked to death. All this the knight understood through the virtue of the root which he had swallowed ; and his wife was surprised at the close attention he paid to the dispute, and she desired that he would tell her what the sparrows had said, since he had listened so attentively to their chatter. The knight answered, " I only looked at the sparrow which has now been worried to death by the others, but what they meant by that is more than I know." But the lady persisted in her inquiries even more eagerly than before, and when she saw that he would not confess the truth, she swore that she would not eat or drink till he told her, and soon she fell sick and asked for the last sacraments. At that the knight was much troubled.

Now it fell on a day that he sauntered dolefully in his yard, and there he heard one cock say to another cock, " I thought that we had a master, but now I see clearly that we have none, for my master lets himself be bullied by his wife to the top of her bent. As for her sickness, I know all about it ; for she devours two of my hens daily, and should her sickness last only ten days more there will not be one solitary hen left on the roost. If only my master were a man, he would take a pair of stout cudgels and break them over her back ; that would cure her, I warrant you." The knight understood every word, and thinks he to himself, " Egad, I'll take your advice." With that he rode out into the country, and when he came into the wood he hews him two stout cudgels and hies him home at evening, and goes to his wife and begs her to get out of bed and sup with him. She refused, and said testily that she would not eat. Then the knight fairly lost his temper and whacked her without mercy till he had broken the two cudgels across her back, but still she would not sup with him. And when the cock heard her shrieks, he came flying and looked on, and when he saw that

his master had broken both the cudgels, he screamed, " Give it her with the stumps ! " Hearing these words the knight took the hint and gave it her with the stumps till the blood ran, and when the knight's wife saw that he was in earnest she got up out of bed and supped with him. Thus the knight took a leaf out of the cock's book ; and as for you, my brethren, beware how you let yourselves be hoodwinked by your wives.¹

A German version of it, recorded orally at Gross-Kreutz, near Brandenburg, about 1842, runs as follows :

Once upon a time there was a man who was very clever, for he understood the language of all animals, but for all his cleverness he could not keep his wicked wife within bounds. It happened one day that he sat in his yard and listened to the talk of the beasts, but as their talk fell on a merry topic he laughed aloud, and his wife saw it. Thereupon she pressed him with great vehemence (for she was very curious) to tell her what he had laughed at ; but though he would gladly have contented her, yet durst he not, for it would have cost him his life. So he refused, but that only made his wife the more impatient and angry, and she heaped taunts and reproaches on him, saying that he always kept secrets from her.

So it went on from day to day, till the man at last grew sad and moody, and went about with hanging head, thinking how he could mend matters. Well, one day he went into the yard and saw how the cock strutted about and crowed loudly. But the dog kept quite still and said to the cock, " How can you be so gay when our master is so sad on account of his wicked wife who gives him no peace ? " " I think," answered the cock, " that he will change his tune. He has only to take an example from me. I have more than a hundred wives, but woe to the one that would dare to disobey me, I would peck the eyes out of her head in a moment ; and yet he has only one wife and cannot manage her ! " The master heard this discourse with pleasure, for he saw that the cock was right ; so he went into his house on the instant, took a

¹ *Gesta Romanorum, das älteste
Märchen- und Legendenbuch des christ-
lichen Mittelalters, zum ersten Male
vollständig aus dem Lateinischen ins*

Deutsche übertragen von Dr. Johann
Georg Theodore Grasse, 3. Ausgabe
(Leipzig, 1905), vol. ii. pp. 182-184.

whip and laid on lustily to his wife, asking if she still wished to know why he had laughed. She at once knocked under and never again in her life desired to know her husband's secrets. And from that moment they lived happy and content to the end.¹

A Magyar version of the story runs thus :

A shepherd saved the life of the daughter of the King of Snakes, the princess narrowly escaping death by fire. To show her gratitude to her deliverer she taught him the language of animals, and he was able to understand them. One day his donkey said something that made him smile ; whereupon his wife began to tease him, wishing to know the joke, but the shepherd could not gratify her wish, because he knew that the penalty of betraying the secret would be his own sudden death.

However, his wife would not give in and leave him in peace, but continued to badger him with so many questions that he at last made up his mind to die rather than bear his wife's nagging any longer. So he had his coffin made and brought to his house, and he lay down in it, ready to divulge the secret and die on the spot. His faithful dog sat mournfully by his side watching, while the house-cock hopped merrily about the room. The dog expostulated with the cock, saying that this was not the time for merriment when their master was so near to death. But the cock took him up very short. " It's master's own fault," said he, " why is he such a great fool and coward ? Look at me ! I have fifty wives, and they all do as I tell them to do. If I can manage so many, surely he ought to be able to manage one ! "

Hearing that, the shepherd jumped out of the coffin, seized a wet rope-end, and gave his wife a sound thrashing. Peace was thus restored, and they lived happily together ever after.²

A Roumanian version of the story runs, in an abridged form, to the following effect :

Once upon a time there was a rich man who had an only child, a daughter, named Marie. The girl was loved by a

¹ Adalbert Kuhn, *Markische Sagen und Marchen* (Berlin, 1843), pp. 268-270, " Die böse Frau ".

collected by Kriza, Erdélyi, and others, translated and edited, with comparative notes, by the Rev. W. Henry Jones and Lewis L. Kropf (London, 1889), pp. 301 sq.

poor young man named John, who offered to marry her. But her father was proud as well as rich and would bestow his daughter's hand on none but a wealthy suitor ; so he rejected John's suit on account of his poverty.

Now it happened that the rich man had two goldfinches which he kept in a cage. The birds sang ravishingly, and their owner used to listen to them with rapture till the tears came into his eyes for very joy. But one day the birds fell silent and nothing seemingly could induce them to tune up their melody again. The master was distressed, for he loved the birds and sorely missed their music. In his distress he even declared that he would give his daughter in marriage to any man who should induce the birds to sing again. When John heard this he resolved to learn the language of birds, in order that he might question the two goldfinches and find out why they had fallen suddenly and obstinately silent

One day, on his wanderings, John saw a white snake in a well and saved it from drowning by drawing it out of the water. The grateful snake requested John to carry him to his mother, the Queen of Snakes, assuring him that his mother would offer his deliverer a rich reward, but warning him to accept no gift save a knowledge of the language of animals. It turned out as the white snake had foretold. The Queen of Snakes offered him bronze, silver, or gold, but John refused them all, saying that he would accept no reward but a knowledge of the language of animals. The Queen of Snakes at first objected to granting the request, but at last she brought him the head of a white snake, telling him that if he roasted and ate it he would understand the language of flowers and birds and all animals, but warning him at the same time that he must not reveal his knowledge to any one or he must die at once.

Armed with this secret knowledge, John now returned to the house of the rich man and questioned the two goldfinches as to the reason of their silence. To his joy he discovered that their silence was caused by their master's refusal to give his daughter in marriage to John, and that nothing but the union of the young pair would induce them to resume their melodious minstrelsy. So the girl's father was obliged to consent to their marriage, and married they were.

One day, as he and his wife were out riding, the horse on which he was mounted fell behind the horse on which his wife rode. The horse on which his wife rode thereupon asked the other horse, "Why do you lag behind?" The other horse replied, "Because you carry the mistress, who is slim and light, while I carry the master, who is big and heavy." John understood this talk of the horses, but his wife did not.

Another time, when he was out hunting with his wife in the wood he heard the talk of two dogs. One of the dogs said to the other that he would run home and look after the house, lest in the absence of the master and mistress it should be robbed by thieves. So saying, the dog ran away and made for home. John understood what the dog had said, but his wife did not.

Another day John stood at the window looking out into the garden. There some sparrows were busy pecking at the seeds on a row of hemp stalks. In doing so they let fall some of the seeds, which were picked up by the barndoor fowls. But one of the sparrows flew down to the ground and began picking up the fallen seeds among the fowls. On that the cock remonstrated with the sparrow, saying, "You have enough seeds up there among the stalks, leave the seeds on the ground to us." On hearing this remark of the cock John laughed. His wife asked him why he laughed, adding that she had long suspected him of keeping a secret from her. John said that if he told her he must die. But she insisted on knowing, so her husband prepared to die and ordered his coffin.

But on his way home from ordering the coffin he heard the cock crowing, and saying, "Our master is a fool; he has only one wife and cannot manage her. I have a whole troop of wives and they must obey me. In his place I would buy a rope and give her a good hiding. She would soon drop her curiosity and forget to ask questions." The man thought to himself, "What a stupid fellow am I, to need to have my eyes opened by the cock!" So he went and bought a rope of the rope-maker, and with it he gave his wife such a drubbing that she lost all her curiosity and taste for asking questions. She never again inquired of her husband why he

laughed, and if he did not die of sickness or old age he must be alive to this day.¹

An Albanian version of the story runs as follows :

"A certain man was gifted with the power to understand the talk of beasts and birds, but on condition only that, should he ever tell that which he heard, he would drop down dead.

"One day he heard the donkey talking to the horse. The donkey's remarks were very funny, and, as he came from the stable, he laughed. 'Why are you laughing?' asked his wife. 'At something the donkey said.' 'What did the donkey say?' 'You know I cannot tell you. I should drop down dead.' But she was wicked, as all women are, and she only answered, 'What did the donkey say?' And all day long and all night she gave him no peace, and he had neither sleep nor rest, for still she asked, 'What did the donkey say?'

"Worn out at last, he could bear no more : 'To-morrow I will tell you,' he said. He called his little children and said good-bye to them, and told them he must die to-morrow. They cried bitterly and begged, 'Oh, mother, do not kill our dear father !' But she answered only, 'I want to know what the donkey said.'

"So the poor man went out to take a last look at the yard, and there he saw the cock standing on tiptoe, flapping his wings and crowing as loud as he could. 'Oh, you wicked bird!' cried the dog, 'How can you laugh and sing when our dear master, who is so kind to us, must die to-morrow?' But the cock only crowed the more. 'Laugh!' said he, 'I shall die of laughing! Look at him—the silly fool! He has only one wife, and cannot manage her; while I have fifty, and keep them all in order!'

"The man heard this. He picked up a large stick, and went back into the house. 'Do you want to know what the donkey said?' he asked. 'Yes,' said his wife. Then he gave her a good beating. 'Do you want to know what the donkey said?' he asked. 'Yes,' said she. So he beat her again. 'Do you want to know what the donkey said?' 'Yes,' said she. So a third time he beat her till he was quite

¹ Pauline Schullerus, *Rumanische Volksmärchen* (Hermannstadt, 1907), No. 126, "Die Mar der Blumen", pp. 263-269.

tired. 'Do you still want to know what the donkey said?' 'No,' said she. And they lived very happily ever afterwards"¹

A Greek version of the story, taken down in the island of Lesbos, runs thus:

There was a young man who had not all his wits about him. Every day he walked in the streets and everybody made fun of him. "Go, then, and give alms to the sea!" they said to him. So he used to buy a loaf, go down to the shore, and, crumbling the bread, throw the crumbs into the water. A fish used to come and eat them.

Once the young man went to the edge of the sea with empty hands; when he saw the fish drawing near as usual he began to weep. "Poor fish," said he to it, "I have no more money to buy you bread." "It is my turn," answered the fish, "I will now repay the kindness you did to me. Put your finger to my mouth." And he gave him a little shining stone and said to him, "When anybody has this stone in his mouth, he understands the language of animals. Such is its worth. But beware of speaking about it to anyone under pain of losing your life."

Endowed with this wonderful stone the young man went into a valley and there lay down on the ground with the stone in his mouth. A raven came flying over him, accompanied by its young one. The young one, thinking that the man was dead, swooped down to devour his flesh. The man caught it. By virtue of the stone he could talk with the mother raven, who begged him to let go her young one, promising to show him a hidden treasure. So the young man grew rich and married a wife.

One day he went to a fair with his wife. He had the stone in his mouth. His wife, who was with child, rode a mare, which was also pregnant. The mare was followed by her little foal. Now the foal was hard put to it to keep pace and always lagged behind. Then it said to its mother, "Stop a bit that I may catch you up." "But as for me," replied the mare, "I carry three and yet I walk fast, whereas you are free. So make haste!"

Hearing this talk, the man began to laugh. His wife asked

¹ M. Edith Durham, *High Albania* (London, 1909), pp. 187-189.

him why he laughed "It is nothing," answered the man, "it was something I remembered that made me laugh." But his wife insisted, so he said to her, "I will confide it to you when we have returned to the house."

When they were at home, his wife reminded him of his promise. Seeing there was no help for it the poor man resolved to make a clean breast of it and die. He went down into the yard to feed the fowls for the last time. He saw the cock make up to a hen. The hen fought shy and said to the cock, "Our master will soon die, and yet you think of nothing but your pleasure!" "Let him die!" answered the cock, "he is a fool." "But what is he to do with the nagging of his wife?" replied the hen. "He has only to take a stick and beat her till she stops nagging," said the cock. At that the good man said, "The cock is not such an ass as I am." He followed the cock's advice, and his wife left him in peace.¹

An Italian version of the story, recorded in the Abruzzi, runs as follows:

When Jesus Christ and his apostles were on earth they lodged one day in the house of a rich man. In return for the hospitality which he showed them the host begged of Jesus Christ as a favour that he might learn the language of animals. Jesus Christ granted his request, but warned him that he must not reveal the secret to anyone, not even to his wife.

After the august guests had departed, the man said to his wife, "Let us go and see how the cattle are faring." So they went to the cattle-stall and found the animals wrangling. The ox was saying to the ass, "It is all very fine for you. You have nothing to do but to carry your mistress on the saddle; you have fresh grass to eat, and fresh water to drink, and no beating to fear." The ass said, "Have you no sense? Has God given you such weapons and yet you do not know how to use them in your own defence? When next they come to yoke you to the plough, do you just kick with your hoofs and butt with your horns." The ox replied, "Tell that to the asses. If I did that, they would carry me off to the

¹ G. Georgeakis et Léon Pineau, *Le Folk-lore de Lesbos* (Paris, 1894), Conte

No. viii. "Le Langage des Animaux", pp. 46-49.

slaughter-yard the very next day." The ass answered, "Well, when you wish to rest, flop down as if you were ill." The ox was delighted with the sly advice, but the master was still more astute, for he had heard and understood everything.

Next morning early, when the servant went to fetch the ox, he found him stretched at full length on the ground. So he ran to tell the master. But the master, aware of the trick, said to the servant, "Yoke the ass and the sick ox to the plough, and let the other oxen rest." The servant thought it a crazy order, but he obeyed.

That evening the ass and the ox returned to the stall dead with fatigue. The master set himself to listen to what they said to each other. The ox said, "You see what has happened to me all through you!" The ass answered, "Thank God for it! What if the master had sent you to the shambles?" At that the master burst out laughing. His wife wished to know why he laughed. But he made an excuse. "An odd thing came into my head," said he. His wife would not believe him, she insisted on his revealing the secret, but he remained firm. So she went away in a fury and shut herself up in her room. Her husband also went into the house. In a melancholy mood he looked out of the window. Meanwhile the cock was crowing and strutting about among the hens. But the dog said to the cock, "Are you not ashamed? The master is downcast and the mistress is enraged, and you sing and are merry!" The cock answered, "It serves master right. Look at me! I have more than twenty wives, and no sooner do I call them than they all run to me and always obey me. Let the laggard beware of my beak! But the master would always be good-natured. Why doesn't he take a mallet and break the woman's ribs?"

The master knocked at the door of his wife's room. She opened it, but was still on her high horse. He said to her, "Well, have you come round?" "No, no," said she, "you're a brute. Who knows what you were thinking? And you would not tell me. Why? why?" "Would you like to know why?" he asked, "then this mallet will tell you." With that he began to hammer her in good earnest.

She cried, "Beat me no more! I no longer wish to know your doings. I am quite content." From that day she never played the grumbler again.¹

The story with which we are dealing appears to be particularly common in Central and especially in Eastern Europe. Mr. Antti Aarne has noted six Esthonian and no less than sixty-two Finnish versions.² On the other hand, it is seemingly absent in the west; not a single example of it has been recorded from oral tradition in Spain, France, and the British Islands.³ This remarkable contrast in respect of distribution suggests that the story is of Oriental origin and has passed into Europe from the East.

The question of the origin of the story has been carefully investigated by Mr. Antti Aarne. He distinguishes two forms of it, an Eastern and a Western, but comes to the conclusion that both forms had a common origin in India.⁴ Yet he holds it unlikely that any of the ancient literary versions is the origin of the story; probably they are all derived either from a still older literary version, now lost, or from popular oral tradition.⁵ Further, he is of opinion that the story was invented at a stroke by a single individual, and not gradually elaborated by a succession of story-tellers, who added one feature after another to the tale.⁶ On such a subject demonstration is impossible and we are confined to a weighing of probabilities. So far as I can judge, all the evidence and all the probabilities favour the conclusions reached by Mr. Aarne in his learned and judicious monograph. His views are in substantial agreement with those of the great scholar, Theodor Benfey, who first called attention to the story and illustrated its wide geographical diffusion. Benfey held that the tale originated in India and spread thence through Western Asia to Europe and Africa, being one of the few products of Indian fancy which have made their way over the whole of the Old World.⁷

¹ Antonio de Nino, *Usi e Costumi Abruzzesi*, iv. (Firenze, 1887), pp. 51-54.

² Antti Aarne, *Der tiersprachenkundige Mann und seine neugierige Frau*, pp. 4-20 (*FF Communications*, No. 15).

³ Antti Aarne, *op. cit.* p. 68.

⁴ Antti Aarne, *op. cit.* pp. 55 sqq.

⁵ Antti Aarne, *op. cit.* p. 70.

⁶ Antti Aarne, *op. cit.* pp. 80 sq.

⁷ Theodor Benfey, "Ein Märchen von der Thiersprache, Quelle und Verbreitung", *Orient und Occident*, ii. (Göttingen, 1864), p. 135.

To consider the question of origin for a moment from a more general point of view, in endeavouring to trace the history of any invention or institution we must always bear in mind, as I have pointed out elsewhere,¹ a twofold possibility; either, on the one hand, the invention may have originated once for all in a single place, from which it has gradually spread over a greater or lesser area of the earth's surface; or, on the other hand, it may have originated independently several times over in various places, from which it may in like manner have been gradually diffused over a greater or lesser portion of the globe. Of the institutions which have originated once for all in a single place, the great historical religions, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, are among the most conspicuous and the most indubitable instances, for few can doubt that these great systems took their rise in the religious genius of individuals in India, China, Palestine, and Arabia. But on a lesser scale folk-tales of a certain degree of complexity furnish almost equally sure examples of inventions which have had their origin once for all in a single place; for while similar stories of a very simple type may conceivably have been invented independently several times over, it is difficult to imagine that complex narratives, involving a series of connected incidents, can have ever been invented more than once in the history of humanity. Who could think that the *Pilgrim's Progress* or *Vanity Fair* could ever be conceived and written twice or thrice over by authors wholly independent of each other? Among such fictions as have been invented once for all may safely be reckoned the story of the Man who understood the Language of Animals and his Curious Wife.

P. 116. The Tarantschi-Tartar version was published in 1886.—This Tartar version is now accessible in an English translation.²

P. 120. In a Bohemian tale an old woman brings a serpent to a king, telling him that if he ate it he would understand the language of all animals.

¹ *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, vol. i. pp. 106 sq.; *The Gorgon's Head*, pp. 348 sqq.

² C. Fillingham Coxwell, *Siberian and other Folk-tales* (London, N.D.), pp. 319-321.

This Bohemian story is now accessible in an English translation ¹

P. 122. The idea that the magic serpent, whose flesh imparts a knowledge of the language of animals and plants, is to be found under a hazel tree, occurs also in Germany.

In Lechrain, the country on both sides of the river Lech which from time immemorial has formed the boundary between Bavaria and Swabia, "adders are very plentiful on the Lech; they are of all sizes and colours. Many of them have their lair particularly at wells. There are even white adders, and where these are, the King is never wanting. He has a golden crown, but is extremely seldom seen. Such white adders are also to be found under hazel bushes which have mistletoe growing on them and are therefore very old; it is there that the white adders can most easily be caught. If a man catches one of them, strips the skin off, extracts the tongue, and eats a good piece of the flesh, he has all the luck in the world; also he can make himself invisible, and all doors and bolts open before him; also he knows all herbs on earth, and understands the language of birds" ²

P. 124. It is said to be a common belief in Wales, Scotland, and Cornwall that about Midsummer Eve the snakes meet in companies and by joining heads and hissing produce a glass ring, which whoever finds shall prosper in all his undertakings; and these rings are called snake stones.—This belief in serpent-stones appears undoubtedly to be a relic of Druidism in the Celtic countries where it exists, or at all events existed down to modern times. Pliny calls them a sort of eggs, and says that they were very famous in Gaul, though unknown to the Greeks. They were believed to be produced by the slaver and foam of serpents coiling and writhing together. According to the Druids, as reported by Pliny, the egg thus produced by the hissing serpents was shot up by them into the air, and he who would possess himself of the treasure must catch it in a cloak, lest it should touch the ground, and having caught it he must gallop away, for the serpents would pursue him

J ¹ A. H. Wratislaw, *Sixty Folk-tales from exclusively Slavonic Sources* (London, 1889), pp. 25 sqq., "Golden-hair".

² Karl Freiherr von Leoprechting, *Aus dem Lechrain. Zur deutschen Sitten- und Sagenkunde* (München, 1855), p. 77.

till they were stopped by the interposition of a river. The proof of the genuineness of one of these serpent-eggs was if it floated against the stream, even when it was set in gold. The Druids thought that the precious egg could only be got on a certain day of the moon. Pliny had himself seen one of these serpent eggs. He describes it as of the bigness of an ordinary apple encrusted in a cartilaginous skin like the prickly shell of a sea-urchin. The Druids set a high value on such an egg as a talisman to ensure success in lawsuits and access to kings. The Emperor Claudius put to death a knight of the Vocontian Gauls for carrying in his bosom a serpent-egg when he was engaged in a lawsuit.¹

In Scotland the stone is called in Gaelic *Clach Nathrach*, that is, Serpent Stone, or *Glaine Nathair*, that is, Serpent Bead or Glass. "The ordinary *Glaine Nathair* (Serpent Glass) is of smaller size than is indicated by Pliny. The one which the writer saw was about the size of a gun bullet, and about $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. long. There was a hole through from end to end, and depressions on its sides, as if it had once been soft, and had been taken up gently between the finger and thumb. It is of transparent glass, but glass unlike that of the present day. There are extremely brilliant and curious streaks of colour in it. It is now merely a family heirloom, but in olden times was in great demand for dipping in water to be given to bewitched persons or beasts. The sloughed skin (*cochull*) of the serpent itself was used for the same purpose. Water in which it was dipped was given to sick beasts. The tale as to the manner in which it was originally got is the same as is told of other beads of the same kind. The serpents are assembled in a coiling mass, with their heads in the air hissing horribly, slavering, and out of their slaver making the serpent stone. The spittle, in course of becoming solid, was known as *meall òchd*. That the story was not implicitly believed is shown by the addition that, when the bead is finished, one of the serpents puts its tail through it. Thus the hole by which it is perforated is made.

"In the case of the bead which the writer saw, the person who came upon the serpents at their work is said to have waited till the reptiles slept. He then worked the bead out

¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxix. 52-54.

of their circle with a straw or twig of heather. As he took it up between his finger and thumb, and made off with it, he observed that the pressure of his fingers marked it, it being still soft, and this made him put a straw through it to carry it home. This story fairly accounts for the shape of the bead and the marks upon it. The marks look as if they were so made when the stone was soft. Another account says that the finder came on a rock above where the serpents were at work, and, rolling his plaid into a ball, threw it down the rock near them. Instantly the serpents made a dash at the plaid, and while they were reducing it to shreds he made off with the Adder Stone. By means of a sharp-pointed stick, prepared for the purpose, and thrust through the soft bead, he raised it to the top of the rock, and taking it between his finger and thumb, ran home.

"Similar legends of the Adder Stone were current in the Lowlands. Scott says the name is applied 'to celts and other perforated stones'. In the Highlands the name is not applied to stones. In Wales and Ireland the bead is known as 'Druid's Glass'." ¹

With regard to Adder or Serpent Stones, an English visitor to Scotland in 1699 reported that "not only the vulgar, but even gentlemen of good education, throughout Scotland, were fully persuaded that snakes made them". He had seen at least fifty different kinds of these amulets between Wales and the Highlands of Scotland. The Adder Stone was hung from the neck as a cure for whooping cough and other ailments of children. It was esteemed a charm to ensure prosperity and repel evil spirits. The owner kept it in an iron box as a security from fairies, who are believed to have a peculiar aversion to that metal. ²

On this subject an eminent Scottish antiquary speaks of "the large beads of glass or vitreous paste and amber, so well known among the contents of British tumuli, and associated, even in our own day, with the same superstitious virtues ascribed to them in the writings of the philosophic but credu-

✓ ¹ John Gregorson Campbell, *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1902), pp. 84, 85-87.

✓ ² John Graham Dalyell, *The Darker*

Superstitions of Scotland (Glasgow, 1835), p. 141, referring to *Llwyd*, Letter from Linlithgow, ap *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. xxviii. No. 9, p. 98.

lous Pliny. The very same story, in fact, is told of the *Adder-stane* in the popular legends of the Scottish Lowlands as Pliny records of the origin of the *Ovum Anguinum*. . . . They are variously known as Adder Beads, Serpent Stones, Druidical Beads, and among the Welsh and Irish by the synonymous terms of *Gleini na Droedh* and *Glaine nan Druidhe*, signifying the Magician's or Druid's glass. Many of them are exceedingly beautiful, and are characterized by considerable ingenuity in the variations of style. Among those in the Museum of the Scottish Antiquaries there is one of red glass, spotted with white, another of dark brown glass, streaked with yellow; others of pale green and blue glass, plain and ribbed; and two of curiously figured pattern, wrought with various colours interwoven on their surface."¹ Among the magical virtues which these ancient glass beads are believed to possess is that of a preservative against the bite of a serpent.²

SOME POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS OF THE ANCIENTS

P. 130. the so-called "symbols of Pythagoras".—In the text I have argued that many of these so-called "symbols", which passed muster in antiquity for profound moral or philosophical maxims, are nothing but popular superstitions, which survive to this day among the uneducated classes of Europe and among many uncivilized peoples in many parts of the world. The same view of them has since been adopted and amply demonstrated by a German scholar, Dr. Friederich Boehm, in a learned and judicious dissertation.³ It is no longer possible for any well-informed student to mistake the majority of these "symbols" for anything else than curious and instructive examples of primitive ignorance and error persisting even in the midst of a civilized and cultured society.

P. 132. Pythagoras believed that an earthquake was caused by the dead men fighting with each other under ground, and so shaking the earth.—So the Baluba, a large tribe in the upper

¹ Daniel Wilson, *The Archaeology and Prehistoric Annals of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1851), pp 303 sq.

of the Ancient Celts (Edinburgh, 1911), pp. 328 sq.

² Fridericus Boehm, *De symbolis Pythagoreis, Dissertatio Inauguralis* (Berolinum, 1905).

J. A. MacCulloch, *The Religion*